

THE HEIRLOOM



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THE HEIRLOOM.




THE HEIRLOOM

OR

THE DESCENT OF VERNWOOD MANOR

BY

T. DUTHIE-LISLE



VOL. III.

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GAY AND BIRD

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CHAPTER I.

THE LOST HEIRLOOM.

AFTER the startling and ghastly discovery and disclosure which had been made by the noble dog Monk—the inborn instinct of the dog thus showing itself in its way, as it not seldom does, more than a match for the intelligence of man—to say that the shock which the perhaps somewhat delicate phlegmatic physical and mental organization of the negro-born Jules Massey sustained at the ghastly disinterment of the remains, to say that Jules Massey was well-nigh as down-stricken as when only a very few months before, on the fatal night of the murder, he was when he had been the discoverer of his late murdered master's body, would perhaps be no exaggeration of the fact.

For some minutes, as Jules stood on the jutting rocky crag beneath which the body lay, the dark man was like one rooted to the ground, while the great and noble dog was all the while using his utmost exertions to unearth and free the corpse from its surrounding mass of dirt and rocky *débris* and drifted snow.

With feet and teeth he scratched and tore with all his not insignificant strength, then with the warmth of his own body, or licking the dead man's face and hands, again would he labour, with the wondrous instinct so deeply seated in his nature, to reanimate, to cause the warm blood again to course through that now cold frame of the dead, and then, standing his fore paws on the dead body of his late master, would he throw back his great head in the air, and give expression to his desire by, at intervals, venting it in long, loud, deep-mouthed bays, or, like as he did on the night of the murder, one long-drawn melancholy howl, which echoed

weird and strangely through the deep still woods and rocky glens, now slumbering so noiselessly and silently, so motionless beneath their unsullied pall of spotless untrodden snow.

For some minutes Jules Massey gazed at the spectacle before his eyes ; then, without attempting to touch or remove the body, without even calling off the dog, with that same sickness of heart which he had experienced on the discovery of the murder, and which the more tender-hearted and inexperienced of us feel at the sight of some horrid form of death, Jules Massey turned away.

Perhaps there are those who would say that Jules Massey was a coward, and perhaps at that moment he was, for there are circumstances which are so full of dread that they make cowards of us all. And perhaps too cowardice, like heroism, is an anomalous thing, for perhaps cowardice as the world names it is bold ; and while there are soldiers—for the

soldier is supposed to be the personification of heroism—who would not flinch or fear in the midst of battle, in the belching flame and thunder of artillery, of death and ruin and carnage, yet would shrink from the perpetration of a dastard act or the utterance of an unholy word, and whose fearless heart would quail before a woman's reproach or be melted by a child's tear.

So, without attempting to remove the body of his late master, without approaching nearer to it than the crag above it on which he stood, Jules Massey turned away.

He floundered and struggled again up through the snow-covered woods, now more than waist deep in some accumulated drift, now thrown lengthways on his face as he blundered over some snow-hidden boulder or obstacle which lay concealed beneath the snow in his path, groaning in the very utter discomfit of his body, and overwhelmed in the agony of his soul.

At last he reached where he struggled on to a more familiar footing, and in the vicinage of the mausoleum was on surer ground ; then on past the Dower House—he sometimes ran, sometimes floundered, blundered, and fell—then down the hilly road, either by running or falling, making the best of his way, till he came to where, in the direction from the mansion, opposite to David Blackman's chalet, some labourers were hewing timber in the woods, and to these men he imparted what he had seen, directing them to go direct and inform Mr. Price, whose residence was some distance away, and who was, as already stated, factor on the estate.

Of course the news of the recovery of the body of the late master of Vernwood flew far and wide and on every tongue.

Meanwhile, as fast as the horses' legs which that morning brought him to Vernwood could take him back from whence he came, Jules Massey returned to the town, and then, as fast

as electric wires could be made to convey the message, Mr. Lumley was informed that the late Bertram Gonault's body had been found.

Jules Massey spent another unhappy night in the country inn, and by the following afternoon he was joined by Mr. Lumley from London, accompanied by Colonel Vander Meulen and Doctor Sirius Wells.

And then Jules Massey related to them the whole ghastly minutiae of what had taken place.

Without further delay, through a warmth of atmosphere which was as genial as that of spring, and which converted the ground beneath their horses' feet, which the day before was deep snow, into depths of yellow mud, and caused the drippings of melting snow to fall like a shower of great drops of rain from the over-hanging branches of the trees, the four men again drove over to Vernwood with all speed.

The carriage passed into the grounds, and then over the Ionic bridge, and away up to the mausoleum.

Some men, labourers on the estate, those who had known and loved Bertram Gonault in life, were loitering about the place. But on every face there had settled that sad, blank, downcast, woebegone air, a spirit of inexpressible gloom and sadness seemed to reign throughout that death-haunted grove.

In reply to questions from Mr. Lumley as they drove up to the circular enclosure, the loiterers pointed to the building of the mausoleum, they pointed, for their hearts were too full to express much sentiment in words.

The entrances to the mausoleum chapel were opened or unfastened, and then silently, reverently, the London lawyer followed the two detectives, and Jules Massey with a feeling almost of revulsion entered the beautified and renovated fane.

All within, without, around, was as perfectly the place of cleanliness, and renovation, and order, as, before its restoration, it had been the charnel-house of unhealthy vapours and unclean beasts, and all that was too loathsome even for the proximity even of death. And there on a raised, improvised catafalque, which Mr. Price had caused to be hurriedly erected before the altar, in the same coffin in which he had previously been interred, but now cleansed of the dirt and mire, in the fine linen and spotless napery of the grave, rested the remains of what was once Bertram Gonault.

With a melancholy, with a depressing gloominess of soul which cannot be expressed, Mr. Lumley and his companions gazed once more on the resting face of the dead.

Whether it was the preservative influence of the atmosphere, those sunless weeks and cold days during which Bertram Gonault had lain in the grave, whether it was the partial process

of embalming which the body had undergone almost immediately after death, or whether it was the inexorable hand of that Providence or fate which seems in one form or another ever to point to the assassin's trail, we cannot tell. But whatever it may be, the face and features of the dead, of Bertram Gonault, as he lay there in death, were strangely, wonderfully, almost fearfully unchanged from their aspect in life—there was the intellectual face, the sparse locks of hair, the well trained moustaches, the scar on the right cheek indelible even in death.

And as the incredulous American detective gazed silently, and for once awe-stricken, on that face, he perhaps for the first time, then and not till then, believed that Bertram Gonault was actually dead.

The long white bony hand rested across the bosom of the dead, shrunken perhaps but apparently as yet almost untouched by what is perhaps the most loathsome influence on

humanity, that abhorrent influence of decay which tells us so plainly that we are but dust.

A silence that was awful and impressive seemed to pervade and bow down the spirits of the four men as side by side they stood over that restful bier.

And then suddenly, as if moved by some thought which arose in his mind, Mr. Lumley turned to Jules Massey :—

“When he lay in the hall of the mansion, before burial, had he not on the ring?” Mr. Lumley asked.

“That was so Misser Lumley,” Jules Massey replied. “That was so! I know it was so!” and as Jules Massey spoke his eyes welled over with tears, hot, burning tears.

“Then what became of it? was it buried with the corpse?”

“Dunno Misser Lumley, 'spose it must a been buried when Mas'r was,” Jules replied in the same sorrowful, choking tone.

We may mention here that Jules Massey, at the time immediately succeeding the murder, although in custody as a suspect only, but not a convict, had, by his own desire, and Mr. Lumley's influence and intercession, when his late master lay in state as we have described in the great Vernwood Hall, been, by the police authorities permitted the favour of looking a last look on his late master's face—indeed Jules Massey's great desire to be allowed this favour had, in the eyes of many impartial judges, a strong appearance in his favour in the case.

When these few words, which in an undertone passed between Mr. Lumley and Jules Massey, fell upon and were overheard by the quick ear of Colonel Vander Meulen who was standing near them, perhaps neither the one nor the other, perhaps neither Jules Massey nor Mr. Lumley remarked the quick, bright ray of intelligence which flitted across, we may say lit up the almost stupid heavy stolidity of

the New York detective's Dutch or German face, for it was a face which the light of intelligence seemed to so ill become that all brightness sat upon it with an unbecoming, it seemed almost an unwelcome grace.

Having viewed the chapel and the dead, the four visitors proceeded then to the spacious vaulted chamber beneath.

Like the mortuary chapel above, the vaulted catacombs beneath were now beautified by no untasteful hand.

Around the walls in their niches could be seen deposited the coffins of the dead.

But now in a suitable position, hewn from a block of costly Parian marble fresh and new from the sculptor's hand, stood one—the one untenanted urn—one sarcophagus, the most beauteous resting-place of all lay open and uncovered, its richly-hewn lid upraised awaiting the reception of its coming occupant in death.

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We need not particularize, we need not write minutiae here, it must be enough that we follow the general thread and tenor of our tale. But all that and part of the following day Mr. Lumley remained at or about or in the vicinity of Vernwood in a sorrowful, serious mood, superintending its affairs.

And, then at last, the final ceremony, in the presence of the lawyer and those who accompanied him, and a few others, was performed.

From the mortuary chapel, where it had lain since its discovery by the dog Monk, the body in the oaken coffin was again removed to the solemnity and silence of the spacious chamber beneath, and committed to its final resting-place on earth in its costly marble urn, and there let us hope to rest till that day and hour which, as a thief in the night, shall come when knoweth no man, and shall echo through the world the blast of that mighty trump which we are told shall sound to the awakening even of

the very dead—and till the coming of that day they laid to rest the mortal remains of Bertram Honour Gonault.

* * * * *

Four sad, silent, sorrowing men, Mr. Lumley, Sirius Wells, Vander Meulen, and Jules Massey, immediately after the final disposal of the dead, returned to town.

Each heart seemed too deeply weighed down, too deeply impressed with the incidents of the last few days to be exuberant of words.

The day had long closed when they alighted at that metropolitan terminal station of that which is the great modern iron road of travel from western English shires.

And here they parted, Mr. Lumley to that richly appointed mansion which the great conveyancing lawyer condescended to honour by the name of "home," one of those massively constructed houses at Lancaster Gate, Jules Massey returned to lodgings in the small house

of which in the locality there are few small houses, between Oxford Street, Park Lane, and Grosvenor Square, while Colonel Vander Meulen went to a small hotel in Westbourne Grove, there, in the fresh light that had come to him, to review, if it were possible, to comprehend, to draw into the one focus of his brain the divergent rays of so unintelligible and weighty a case

CHAPTER II.

THE SEAL OF THE DEAD.

LEFT to himself and his own devices and reflections in the Westbourne Grove hotel, where he took up his temporary abode, and perhaps left above all to the inspiring influences of his twenty-cent weed which seemed to be ever between his teeth, it took Colonel Vander Meulen—who while he was awake his mind was ever alert—not many hours to re-cast, re-mould and mature his plans.

With the acumen of a man with the faculty born of probing to their depths the well-springs of human actions, human motives, and human affairs in their most complicated entanglements, he had reviewed,—now surely with different

eyes,—all the facts of this mysterious case, a case in the which he seemed to unravel, to eliminate, to divide the unreal from the real, seemed to sift, like wheat from chaff, the genuine from the sham, with that unerring sagacity which had placed his name and reputation in the work of his chosen calling on the pinnacle of eminence upon which it stood.

It was only on the day following the arrival in town from Vernwood, the day following the committal to their place of final earthly rest of the remains of the late Bertram Gonault, that Colonel Vander Meulen waited on the great conveyancer Mr. Lumley at his office which we have so often had to mention near Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Although, rather strangely, not much discussion had been entered into at Vernwood as to the fact, it was patent that the late Bertram Gonault had not only been mercilessly murdered, bereft of life, but that his corpse had actually,

and ruthlessly at some time or other, even been stolen from its resting-place in the very grave.

At what time this last act of desecration had been committed on the murdered man's remains, for how long or for how short a time the body had been suffered to rest undisturbed even in his temporary grave, nor how long it had lain hidden beneath the autumn leaves and *débris* of the forest gorge, there was hardly a shred of evidence definitely to prove. All this there was nothing to show, it might not have been allowed to lay for twenty-four hours in its legitimate grave ; none, as far as the outward world knew, none could tell.

We can but acknowledge the workings of an unseen power in all things, and probably had not the latent sagacity of the dog Monk, with an instinct more powerful than human intelligence, been led to the discovery of the remains, as far as man's wisdom could lead him, the body

might have been for ever lost, and the sin been one other added to the category of undiscovered crimes.

But that was not to be. Such is not the way of Heaven in its dealings with those who have stained their hands with human blood.

It was some time during the day following that the American detective called on Mr. Lumley, and the two men entered into a somewhat more exhaustive discussion of the circumstances of the theft of Bertram Gonault's body from the grave, and as well also of his previous violent death,—for of course Colonel Vander Meulen could now no longer have a doubt left upon his suspicious and incredulous mind that the true Bertram Gonault was dead, and although probably he did not tell Mr. Lumley all he thought, the New York private detective had a shrewd suspicion, that although there might be enigmas in it which he could not yet fathom fully, yet that on the whole he saw through all the semi-

opaque waters of doubt and mystery, and could discern more clearly the profounder depths and motives of the crime.

The one thing which seemed to exercise Colonel Vander Meulen's mind was the mysterious circumstance of, and especially the mysterious disappearance of the sapphire ring,—for, as articles of value have a tendency to do, it had by some mystic agency vanished out of sight.

The ring, as we have indicated in an earlier part of this story, was comprised of a large translucent unclouded sapphire cut into an oblong shape and imbedded in a massive setting of yellow gold, a rare stone of the true deep velvety sapphire hue, of high intrinsic value, and had ever, in the eyes of Bertram Gonault and his father before him, been an object of considerable family and historic worth, as a family relic which he had drawn from his father's hand when after the engagement of Five Forks the last battle

of the American Civil War, his father Hubert Gonault lay dying or dead.

It was as we have shown, before the eyes of his mind, that dead white hand which had been the ruling delusion of Bertram Gonault's life, seemed ever to appear. It had been ever the vision of his delirium when on the couch of sickness, or when the hand of death seemed near,—when by reason of the excesses into which he sometimes plunged, among the wild, fantastic, hellish shapes which haunted his disordered brain there ever stood out in strange relief the same strange vision of that dead white hand.

On the tabular facet of the precious gem were engraved the family arms and quarterings, not excluding from the heraldic device,—(that which the late Bertram Gonault would have given much if he could have seen eliminated from the shield),—that hated blot and stain and eye-sore on his escutcheon, the hated sinister bar, telling of illegitimacy back in some remote

generation of his race, a race of unblemished honour, and as the world counts taint, of untainted name.

Such, shortly then, was the object, which although he had never set his eyes upon the precious bauble, seemed to attract its very full share of Colonel Vander Meulen's consideration, almost we may say his affectionate regard.

Yes! Mr. Lumley said he had seen it, knew it, had seen it hundreds of times on the then living owner's finger, for the late Bertram Gonault seemed to hold it as one of the treasures, one of the fascinations of the reckless years of his life, and now, when for ever he had gazed the last long sorrowing gaze upon that poor face, then for the first time it occurred to Mr. Lumley that the precious heirloom as if by some mysterious unseen agency had disappeared.

Certain he was that it had been worn when, on that fatal night, with ruthless murderous

hand the assassin had cut off Bertram Gonault's life.

He had observed that, with a ghastly, a sickening and misplaced and ignorant show of pride, it had, by those who attended to the late Bertram Gonault's obsequies, been displayed an unbecoming show of human utter littleness and earthly greatness when the dead rested in state, and in the confusion of all the surroundings of that dread time and deed.

Although Mr. Lumley now felt certain it must have been ignorantly buried with the body of the dead, the ring, in the pressure of his other affairs, had, until he saw the recovered body lying in the chapel of the mausoleum, passed entirely from his mind.

And now for an intimate acquaintance with that valued jewel and its heraldic device Colonel Vander Meulen felt that, as he expressed himself to the London lawyer, verily he would have given his left hand.

But this anxious desire of the New York detective, Mr. Lumley, after some search among those piles and bundles and boxes of dusty documents relating to the broad acres of his aristocratic *clientèle*, discovered that he was able to satisfy and willing to afford without the sacrifice, on Vander Meulen's part, of that valuable member of his society namely Colonel Vander Meulen's very useful palm, for after some search among those time-honoured documents relating to past indiscretions, past wants, past needs and past deeds, the lawyer was able to produce, very much to the Colonel's satisfaction indeed, some admirable impressions in wax of the signet ring of the late Bertram Gonault, and these wax impressions Colonel Vander Meulen stowed away in some very safe part of his personal attire with as much care as he would had they been veritable greenbacks or gold. And, perhaps, manipulated with that skill which he could apply, they were as good

as greenbacks or gold in the detective's hands.

And so without much further parley,—(for like many very able men Colonel Vander Meulen was not a man given to a superfluous redundancy of words, and he felt that for that day at least he had learned as much as he wanted to know)—the interview, wherein the New Yorker received assurance that, attached to the elucidation of the whole mystery which hung around the Vernwood tragedy there was no insignificant reward, came to an end, and from Mr. Lumley's sanctum Colonel Vander Meulen again withdrew.

* * * * *

Then, very suddenly, rather mysteriously, rather strangely, rather queerly, Mrs. Chicketts thought, the "perfect gentleman," her lodger "Captain West," the splendid dream of her existence, had vanished, and her eyes rested on the glorious personality of Captain West no more.

A polite message by a polite messenger arrived at Mrs. Chicketts' house, walked across the desert of Sahara up to that lady's front door, and on Captain West's behalf, honourably, and even in a liberal, even in a very generous spirit, discharged all demands, and drove away with all the impressive array of Captain West's empty boxes and belongings on a cab.

And thus ended this pleasant passing vision of Mrs. Chicketts' life, the vision of which that vain woman with the blighted life probably retained a vivid recollection, — not to poor Chicketts' advantage—to the end of his days.

But that which seemed more remarkable even than this sudden termination of Captain West's tenancy of Mrs. Chicketts' front rooms, was the quite new departure which it entered into the mysterious head of Colonel Vander Meulen to conceive.

For with that marvellous power of adaptability to all the circumstances of any phase of

life, Colonel Vander Meulen had suddenly taken to the profession—a profession which like other subtle arts is supposed to take a lifetime or years to master—the profession of the stage, Colonel Vander Meulen became a professor of the histrionic art.

Not in its highest phases it is true, not in the highest most soaring flights or representation did he venture, or in the most difficult parts, did the New York detective assume the accomplishments of a new *rôle*.

But doubtless it was his wondrous power of being all in all, of playing all the world's many parts, of playing them as it were by intuition, without all the laborious preliminaries of rehearsal and repetition which renders the life of the professors of the dramatic and the histrionic art a life of hard incessant toil and grind,—perhaps it was this faculty, added to the many other useful gifts with which Colonel Vander Meulen was endowed, which had made him that which

we have described him in the earlier pages of, and throughout this history, the most consummately skilful player of his part, the most devoutly dreaded among the peccant community of New York world ; perhaps they dreaded and feared this wily man-hunter because, like the harmless prey of the jungle, they were deceived as the leopard deceives his prey, by allowing its spots to simulate leafy shadows of the trees.

With that ready art and ready adaptation which in him lay, under the theatrical name of Mr. Wedmore Somers, passing himself off as from some provincial English theatre, but recently landed from an engagement in the United States, our wily friend Vander Meulen thus launched himself into the life of this new *rôle* for like as in Hamlet a play is played within a play, and as a stage is placed upon a stage, so Colonel Vander Meulen was playing a part within a part. He was not only one of life's actors simulating the actor's part, but he

was the simulated actor taking the real actor's part upon the stage.

But except once in a minor and unimportant character the prudence of that doubly clever player Wedmore Somers forbade his posturing behind the footlights of any other than some fifth or sixth rate Metropolitan theatre, where audiences were less critical as they were less exacting and less refined. He knew his game too well for that.

This part however of the New York detective's *rôle* we will not pursue.

But there was one fellow actor with whom Mr. Wedmore Somers became on very chum-mish and friendly terms. The two men acted together, they drank together, they caroused together,—that is as far as Wedmore Somers ever committed himself to anything of the nature of a carousal at all.

But there was one thing which Wedmore Somers knew, and which his boon companion

who was known as Lawrence Haughton did not know. Wedmore Somers—or as we know him Keinrich Vander Meulen—knew that in the great game of life—we may say almost the game of life or death—which these two men were playing, Wedmore Somers knew well that both were playing a double part.

And with so astute a player as Wedmore Somers and playing for such heavy stakes Lawrence Haughton was bound to lose.

CHAPTER III.

A TRAP TO ENTRAP A SUNBEAM.

WE must now once more follow the devious tangled thread of our narrative into the great American Empire City of New York, where Vander Meulen's little ferret man Paul Neugass ever watchfully waited further developments, or was dutifully awaiting the commands of his chief.

But Paul Neugass had not been slothful in his master's business, he had not been an idle watcher, he had not kept laid up in a napkin the talent which his master had committed to his charge, and the meed of diligence which he had invested had not been without its some measure of reward.

But of this we may have more to say.

It was about as soon after Colonel Vander Meulen's interview with Mr. Lumley, as a communication—except by cable—could be hurried across the Atlantic or from London to New York, that Paul Neugass did receive certain orders from his chief.

As soon as it came to the knowledge of the American detective that the ring,—that trinket of such value,—had disappeared from the late Bertram Gonault's dead hand, he thought he had discovered something which was of great importance in his sharp eyes—a mere gossamer thread which many men would not have heeded as it floated in the air, but which if deftly handled might lead him out of the mysterious baffling maze.

The trinket, he knew, must be somewhere in the world, and he resolved that it should be through the lack of no effort of his if it did not come into his hands.

He argued to himself if there was a human being ruthless enough to commit the assassination, there was a human being vile enough and full enough of iniquity to think but lightly of adding to the already full and abundant cup of his iniquity the lesser and less heinous sin ; for theft is the felonious deprivation against his will or surreptitiously of a fellow human being of his goods, but murder is the highway robbery of a fellow-creature's life perhaps—with the exception, when gained, of heaven the most valuable inheritance to which humanity is heir.

Now that which, with certain instructions and orders from his chief, did reach the hands of Paul Neugass as he loitered about Vander Meulen's little den near Battery Park, was one of those wax impressions which Mr. Lumley had given him, and which Colonel Vander Meulen had so very carefully treasured up, of the late Bertram Gonault's sapphire ring.

It is a lamentable reflection how much of the

alloy of poverty has been foisted off on to man—or man has brought upon himself to bear—together with the vastly increasing wealth of the world.

But perhaps, as evil is the inevitable attendant and curse of the good, and the powers of darkness have ever sought to dim the light, so probably in like manner in this world there will ever be squalid poverty as well as overabounding wealth.

There would appear to be a school of misleading fictionists who would palm off on to the innocent, the belief that New York City is the refuge of the thriftless and ne'er-do-well of the old world, the very paradise of the alchemist, the *el dorado* of the money seeker, wherein so they tell you, beggars are no more frequently visible than blue moons, where gold is used to pave the very highways, where every other man is a millionaire, and where poverty is a thing quite unknown.

But reader, if you have hitherto kept outside of the American Empire City, and are therefore innocent of its condition, its wiles, and its little ways, these are delusive fictions which you are advised never for one moment to entertain. For together with the great wealth which has grown up around this gateway into the new world, there has sprung up with it likewise the inevitable degree of squalor, poverty and necessity, which, like some spirit of evil, have come into the gates which lead to prosperity and wealth a realm of gold, as though wafted across the ocean upon the wings of the demons of thriftlessness, sloth, indolence, and—in all their unlovely shapes—of vice and crime.

As in the old world so in the new the curses of necessity and usury abound, the necessitous driven into the toils and machinations of the designing and usurious, as the fowls of heaven are by hunger lured into the fowler's snare, the gloating wealthy draw the very life's blood

from the already attenuated and necessitous coffers of the poor.

And it was upon the assumption of the want and necessities of the necessitous that Paul Neugass played his wily game.

Limited opportunities as Paul Neugass had ever been afforded of enjoying the use of the precious metal, he knew that the American dollar was almighty, and for its possession he saw daily, that men around him slaved, and schemed, and toiled, and even died.

The ring which the millionaire owner of Vernwood when in life had always worn and of which Paul Neugass now held the facsimile impression was a very costly jewel, a jewel which could be converted into the means of much enjoyment, and the little man argued shrewdly and rightly that it would not for long remain in necessitous hands, and none other than the necessitous he argued, had next to the murdered man been possessor of the jewel.

For some few days after he had got possession, from Mr. Lumley, of the late Bertram Gonault's seals, Colonel Vander Meulen resorted to all those tactics to find the actual signet from which they were taken, which are well known to the English detective world.

But as far as London was concerned all Colonel Vander Meulen's efforts had been fruitless and vain, and there seemed on to the rest of the mystery to be as much doubt closing around the loss of the signet heirloom as there had been about every other step and aspect of the case.

But it was now only the denser darkness which is greater before the dawn.

Paul Neugass had no sooner gained possession of one of the late owner's seals which the latter had impressed during his life, than from end to end of the Empire City his attention was directed to those abodes of usury and refuges of the necessitous where articles of

value may be pledged for a mere fraction of their intrinsic worth, and which are no less or more plenteous in England than America, or in London than in New York.

At last, as fortune seems to bestow its favours alike upon the diligent and the bold, the little ferret man thought he had found his reward.

He had examined all the multitudinous and heterogeneous odds and ends displayed in those establishments of New York City, where, to judge from wondrous collections of oddments heaped up, one would think the proprietors of such establishments were by the very demon of heterogeneous accumulation possessed.

Sometimes he would think he had discovered the identical coveted jewel which was for the time being the desire of his life, but then on closer examination he turned disappointed away.

But at last there came his reward.

By the more powerful and official help of the

New York City police, which, after exhausting all his own private powers, he had called in to his aid, commencing near the City Hall, Paul Neugass set about a thorough and systematic inquiry, which he purposed instituting if necessary, through every street from Battery Park to Harlem, for like the hungry bird Paul Neugass resolved that no stone should go unturned beneath which might be deposited the coveted worm.

But Paul Neugass had not proceeded very far ere fortune, which is so fickle and tantalizing to the timid and vacillating, and hands over the key of its treasury to the bold ; seemed to play into his very hands.

In an establishment near the northern end of the Bowery, one of those refuges of the thriftless and necessitous, Paul Neugass came upon what he no longer doubted was the late Bertram Gonault's sapphire ring.

Comparing it with the wax impress which

he had received from his chief, he found it in every particular down to the most microscopic detail to correspond.

There was the shield graven upon the facet of the rare unclouded gem, there was the coat of arms with its quarterings from which was not even omitted that hateful sinister bar, there was the surmounting Gonault crest of the javelin grasped in the gauntleted hand, on the little engraven scroll beneath were distinctly legible in clear but tiny characters, the motto of its owner's house "*Dum vivo nunquam cesso bellare*" (While I live I never cease to war).

With the help of a magnifying glass Paul Neugass and his official companion of the New York City police compared side by side the signet and the seal, and then the little ferret man felt as though he could have danced with delight, could have stood upon his head, could have run a race on all-fours, could have

gone head over heels, could have executed as many somersaults as an acrobat, or could have played any other extraordinary caper in the extravagant intensity and exuberance of his delight.

The possessor or holder of the ring was a Hebrew named Levi Cohen, but who under the name of Simpson, conducted an establishment (as he himself would of course have protested, much to his own pecuniary disadvantage) and solely for the benefit of the numerous family of his many brothers' and sisters' many daughters and sons, and to whom he stood *in loco avunculi* (which may be loosely translated "in their parents' brothers' shoes").

In plain words, although he called himself Mr. Simpson, this said Levi Cohen posed as uncle to as many of the necessitous scions of humanity as, like the spider intimated to the fly, he could induce to enter, and forthwith be

bled, fleeced, and shorn within the doors of his little home.

But under the influence of the lever which Paul Neugass had brought with him, the impressive squeeze which he received at the hand of the limb of New York City law in the shape of an imperative officer of the New York regular police, that much injured Hebrew money lender Mr. Levi Cohen *alias* Simpson was compelled to admit that he had advanced a comparatively insignificant sum of money upon the jewel, which still under due pressure he acknowledged was intrinsically a very valuable gem.

“Then who pledged this article with you?” asked the New York officer of police.

With an air of still greater injured innocence, much as the lot of the Jewish race has ever been one of Gentile oppression, Levi Cohen shook his head.

“S’help him God,” he didn’t know.

But with yet another turn of the Gentile screw, yet another squeeze from that lever-like limb of the New York law, acting much as an instrument of torture in the Spanish Inquisition, in which, like Shylock his Shakesperian prototype, Mr. Levi Cohen thought he saw in the near future the imperilment of his principal, his usury and his bond, the supple Hebrew was brought into a submissive state of mind ; and with slow reluctant fingers felt himself compelled to produce a document relating to the transaction, on which was written the name and address in full in New York, of a certain Michael Jervois.

Having got so far what they desired, with a hint of warning to the now more submissive and gentle Jew, Paul Neugass and the officer of New York police withdrew to review and consider their plans—for to the eager elated mind of Paul Neugass the identity of that certain Michael Jervois—whoever he might be—became as

desirable as imperative a necessity, as only a few hours before, it had been to him to ascertain the whereabouts of the sapphire ring.

And then the natural bent, the genius of Paul Neugass, that useful talent which the observant Vander Meulen saw that in him lay, flashed forth, for whatever the faults or the virtues of the American people may be, they are not slow to recognise and turn to account either special talent in any direction, or brains.

And then Paul Neugass did that which in Yankee parlance would be called rather a smart thing.

Then and there, without affording Mr. Levi Cohen *alias* Simpson any scope or opportunity for false play, he returned to the office of the usurer and offered him, payable within one hour, a reward for his co-operation, which was equal in amount to one-half the money-lender's loan.

The little man's acute thrust struck the

usurer in that tender place which has been the vulnerable point of his peculiar people through all their generations, throughout all time, which has survived apparently all the persecutions, all the wrongs, all the changes of country, climate and dominion, whether in bondage or free, whether prospering or oppressed, namely it appealed to a greed—which alas is by no means confined to the Hebrew race—his avarice, his insatiable love of gold.

Then that which happened we will not describe in detail, but will leave it as our story proceeds for the sequel to show.

Within an hour of his having struck his bargain Paul Neugass had paid the substantial money reward (which he knew where to procure) into Levi Cohen's hands, which raised his bushy eyebrows, and caused his dark beady eyes verily to twinkle with delight. Although it was the price of blood it was an augmentation of his hoard, it was the momentary assuagement

of his thirst for gold, which was a part of his very flesh and blood.

But how to possess himself of a reliable, identifiable, indisputable portrait of the unknown man Michael Jervois, whoever or whatever he might be, who had brought the signet ring to Levi Cohen, was the problem which sorely exercised the little ferret man's mind.

One thing he learned from the pecunious and circumspect usurer was that Jervois had received a far less sum on the security of the jewel than he had asked,—and this became the string upon which the little ferret man quickly saw that he might most tunefully play.

And so that which Paul Neugass did, the first step in his move to gain this desired end, was to request Levi Cohen to write a letter to the man Michael Jervois who had deposited the jewel, telling him that having more exactly priced it, he was now willing either to increase his advance thereon, or would negotiate an

absolute purchase of the ring, at the same time desiring him to pay him a visit at a certain hour on the following day.

Like the wary fisherman who stands in the concealment of the bulrushes by the water's edge and throws his baited hook upon the stream, that was the bait which Paul Neugass cast upon the tide.

Meanwhile he secured the services of a photographer and placed his camera in a small room adjacent to that occupied by Levi Cohen in his trade, but in such a way that although the lense commanded a complete view of the money-lender's sanctum and every one therein in its field, yet from this outer room which Levi Cohen devoted to the purposes of his usurious calling, neither instrument nor operator could be seen.

Such was the simple machinery of the trap which Paul Neugass set to catch, as it were a sunbeam, the shadow of his man, but the

shadow rather than the substance was that which just then he had most exercised his wits to gain.

Thus having adroitly and craftily set his snare the little ferret man patiently, or rather impatiently, awaited its result. Perhaps it would be safe to assert that Paul Neugass slept very little that night, so intent was his mind on the interesting details of his game—a game by which he knew much of his reputation in his master's eyes must stand or fall. It was long before the hour of Levi Cohen's appointment with Jervois that Paul Neugass and his artist were ensconced in the money-lender's little back room—and as the hour drew near the little ferret man's expectancy grew too intense almost to be endured—as he saw the so nearly successful consummation of his scheme.

Then, with a punctuality which would have been worthy of a better cause, Levi Cohen's bell rang, and the next moment the false and

usurious Jew with much fictitious affectation of welcome, admitted Michael Jervois.

The latter appeared to be a man approaching fifty years of age, with long dark curling beard, and with a worn almost dissipated face, and working hands. His dress was dark, ordinary, and plain.

Levi Cohen gave a pre-arranged signal to Paul Neugass and then with the unsuspecting Jervois he entered—intently engaging the attention of the latter—into the business in hand.

Into the details of that business we will not enter. It is enough to say that the business ended by the usurer Levi Cohen paying an additional sum into Jervois' hand. Then bidding his very accommodating banker adieu, the bearded borrower departed a well-satisfied man.

But probably Michael Jervois would have departed far less satisfied, he would have wished the sapphire ring and Levi Cohen in Hades, he would have wished himself at the bottom of the

sea, he would have wished he had never been born, had he known that during that fatal half-hour in the which he was receiving so much careful and kind attention at the false hypocrite's Levi Cohen's hands, in which he thought he was being so generously done by—had he known that more than once, more than twice, so noiselessly, and still so unerringly, through the tell-tale lens, the light of heaven was transferring the true unerring likeness of his face on to that sensitized plate of glass.

But that was a trick which Michael Jervois had yet to learn, it was a trap into which—fatal as it was—even he himself knew not that he had so unwittingly fallen. These were things which Michael Jervois had yet to learn.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT THE TRAPPED SUNBEAM TOLD.

THE summer had passed away, autumn and October in the great London world came in utterly bleak, cheerless, and chill.

It was early morning, early that is as wakes the London world. Through its many arteries the pulsations of the mighty Babylon of modern commerce were beginning to throb anew, and the great torpid sea of human life again to wake and stir.

Busy men in warm coats shuffled along the streets, or hurried from omnibuses, or rushed into their warm offices from hansoms, carriages, or cabs.

Mr. Lumley was among these.

As his business obliged him to quit all the comforts of velvety piled carpeted rooms, bright warm fires, a luxurious breakfast table, to say nothing of the charms of his domestic circle at Lancaster Gate, for the dull routine and dry legal details into which for years he had been daily immersed near Lincoln's Inn Fields, he was uncomfortable, brusque, short-mannered to all about him, and cold. Not that Mr. Lumley's phlegmatic law-sodden person ever under any circumstances, looked very genial, very jovial or warm.

It was one of those dismal, comfortless days in London without, on which he would infinitely have preferred, infinitely enjoyed, lounging at home in a large luxurious arm-chair by a great fire, reading a novel, or *Punch*, or *The Times*, in his own comfortable cosy morning-room.

But Mr. Lumley considered himself a martyr, martyred, held in bondage vile, by the inexor-

able trammels and exactions of an almost lifelong devotion to the law. Held in bondage to a practice worth many thousands of pounds a year, and that was the kind of martyrdom which Mr. Lumley endured.

He reached his office, commenced reading his letters, but had not been thus occupied many minutes when a clerk entered and handed his principal a note.

Rather snappishly,—for it was carefully sealed,—the principal tore it open and read,—

“No. —, — Street,
“ Mile End Road.

“Mr. Lumley,

“Sir,

“I respectfully enclose you herewith three portraits, of which I think if you can identify the original with any person who has ever been on the Vernwood estate may lead to important results.

"I should not send this by messenger were it not impossible for me, through an important affair on hand, to see you.

"Immediate action is advised.

"Respectfully,

"KEINRICH VANDER MEULEN."

Folded carefully up, and enclosed together with the foregoing note were three clear, well-executed portraits of the man whose personal appearance, and the surreptitious capture of whose physiognomy by the little ferret man, Paul Neugass, by means of the concealed camera, we have already shortly described, and whose name we have given the reader as Michael Jervois.

The lawyer perused again and again this concise laconic note, then one by one, he long and closely and thoughtfully examined the three *carte-de-visite* size portraits, representing three different aspects of the same face; then

he folded up the portraits and note, replaced them in the envelope in which they had been handed to him, threw himself back in his comfortably padded, well-worn, shiny, office chair, and for several minutes was buried in the profoundest thought.

Then he glanced at his watch.

Then, rapidly, one by one, he cut open and quickly read a pile of letters which lay before him, did it with that ready celerity and instant grasp of subjects, details, and facts, of a man who had been repeating the same thing almost every morning for the last thirty or forty years. Then he struck twice a silver hand-gong which stood at his side.

The bell rang out with a silvery musical sound.

Immediately a tall intellectual-looking young man, his managing clerk, appeared.

"Mr. Willoughby," said the lawyer, "I wish to give you some instructions," then, one

by one, he ran over some forty letters, giving rapidly his orders on each one, in a way that would have hopelessly bewildered and mystified any but the very cool, clear, clever-headed and practical man which Mr. Lumley's able young managing clerk was.

"And Mr. Willoughby, will you please tell Johnson to order me a cab, and send word to the house that I may be out of town a couple of days? Yes a couple of days."

Having received his orders the clever-looking manager respectfully withdrew.

A few minutes after this, Mr. Lumley in a hansom cab, was being rattled through the cold, misty, early, London streets to the station from which passengers reach the far-off western shires.

What with delays, stoppages, changes, and late trains, Mr. Lumley—for Vernwood was not too easy of access from town—was travelling a good part of the day, and when the

train conveying him drew up at the little station of Vernwood village, the earliest blushes of evening sunset and shadow were tinging and darkening the face of nature with a more weakened ruddy glow, and the shortening October autumn day was rapidly darkening to its close.

There is something so utterly different in the appearance, so absolutely absurd in the contrast of a spic and span exportation from the centre of our great Babylonish life, when he appears among the rustic population of a far-off rural English shire, that the contrast may be likened by comparison to a polished gem set among rude stones which have as it were been untouched by the finishing process of the lapidary's art. And it was something like this comparison that Mr. Lumley looked and felt as he alighted from the train into the rustic Vernwood world, near that fine old English home.

But they knew the portly figure of the

Vernwood lawyer, so perhaps, in the rustic imagination, Mr. Lumley appeared quite a harmless creature—great as he was—and not quite such a natural curiosity to be stared at wonderingly, as a new, real, live importation from London would otherwise have been.

But still Mr. Lumley was without that dual or plural adaptability, which Keinrich Vander Meulen, for instance, in so marked a degree possessed, of being Romish when among the Romans, of being or simulating all things, all characters, in all situations, to all men; the want of which makes the ordinary, every-day Londoner appear in rustic eyes as much of a thorough-going simpleton when he lands in some remote shire, as poor Hodge is caricatured to be on his occasional visits to town. When either of these two characters ventures from his native wilds, the one from the ploughed arables and pastures green, the other from the busy metropolitan streets, it is often difficult to

determine which of the twain looks the most of a fool.

As soon as Mr. Lumley left Vernwood village he set out to cause the circulation of his cold blood by a walk over the two or three miles of country road which had to be traversed from the little station to the estate.

But dreading perhaps the sinister recollections which attached to the mansion, he gave the house itself a wide berth, seeking rather to avoid its near proximity, and to accomplish the journey which he had in view by somewhat more circuitous roads.

A walk, which was not unpleasant, of upwards of an hour's duration, brought him a mile or more (from Vernwood village direction) beyond the mansion, its pleasure grounds, and park; till he reached a house picturesquely situated and somewhat uncommon in its surroundings, as well architecturally as in ornamentation and design.

It was the residence of Mr. Price, who was, as we have before had occasion to tell, residing factor during the interregnum of owners on the Vernwood estate.

It was quite late in the afternoon, or rather it was evening, the hour of the gloaming, which preceded the night, when the London lawyer knocked at Mr. Price's porched front door. It was opened by the head of the household himself, who was quite taken aback at this unexpected apparition of the ruling power.

We have said elsewhere that Bertram Gonault had ever been fortunate in the selection of his stewards, and Mr. Price's tested capacity and fidelity to his master's interests, had already showed itself such as to raise him to a very respectable position in the acute and sharp sighted London lawyer's esteem.

A dark almost swarthy complexioned man, you would have said young man, for he almost

looked young, and as a fact was scarcely half way on the journey of life ; and if in a measure countrified, his mental grasp of affairs would to a stranger soon become apparent. With a mind fresh and not uninteresting, and although he might not be too superficially refined, there was nothing in him of the stolidity of the boor. Such was the steward at Vernwood.

When Mr. Price undid his door his eyes opened very wide with surprise at the sudden and quite unexpected appearance thereat of his chief. He might have thought the sudden appearance almost supernatural, but then Mr. Lumley's tall and portly person was very ample and substantial-looking, so it precluded all ideas of a ghost.

The lawyer extended his hand, and as soon as the factor could collect his rather confused ideas and recover from his surprise he invited his superior in doors.

The hour was just about that which in

middle or lower class households is called tea-time, and around Mr. and Mrs. Price's frugal board were seated of various ages and in various ungraceful attitudes, from the baby to the heir, some six or seven noisy boisterous brats of girls and boys.

As the important-looking London lawyer entered the family circle, especially the more tender offshoots of the house of Price, their fingers and mouths plentifully bespattered with adhesive dainties, were eagerly, with the proverbial rapacity of youth, devouring large portions of the staff of life, plentifully bespread with layers of molasses or jam, while those delicate impressions of which the juvenile mind is so receptive were being vented in a babel of shrill treble tones.

"Now Miss Kattie, if you please, leave my spoon alone."

"Oh, mummy!" called out the eldest girl, "Tim's taking such a lot of jam."

"No I ain't," resented the four-year-older referred to as Tim. "You look out, there's baby shoving his hands into the treacle jar."

Such is a little sample of the conversation carried on at Mrs. Price's board.

But Mr. Lumley's imposing presence produced markedly a quelling influence on this hilarious domestic scene.

There are households, enter them when you will, into which no amount of prosperity seems to bring order, and there are households from which no amount of poverty seems able to drive order, cleanliness, and refinement out.

"I am sorry we cannot offer you any better accommodation, sir," excused the head of the house apologetically; "but you see sir, we didn't expect—— Sarah, my dear, have you got any meat in the house?"

"No, I haven't, James; of course you know I haven't, and you know sir"—to Mr. Lumley

—"our butcher's three miles away—but some eggs!"

So in the absence of any rarer and more *recherché* dainties, Mr. Lumley elected hard-boiled eggs and tea.

The juvenile hilarity had become, by this time, subdued to whispering point, and Tim, Kattie, and the baby gazed on the great man with wondering eyes.

But Mr. Lumley, while in sheer hunger he devoured with gusto his hard-boiled eggs, thought very regretfully of the sumptuous dinner which he should have been enjoying at the well-appointed mansion at Lancaster Gate, of his foaming dry Cliquot, and the oyster soup at which his *chef* was such an adept, the roast grouse and ortolans by the very flavour of which he swore, all crowned with just a nip of Maraschino, French coffee, and one of those choice brands of Partagas for which he paid habitually eighty shillings a pound.

But whatever dignity may appertain to mental toil, only those who labour with their hands know the sweetness of plain fare.

At length the unexpected guest at Mr. Price's table had finished his homely repast.

All the time it was in progress the steward had been puzzling his brains to divine what could have caused the lawyer to put in an appearance at Vernwood in this unexpected way.

But the meal over, Mr. Price was not left long altogether in doubt. At a sign from Mr. Lumley the two men withdrew from what was the general living room, where Tim was now entertaining the baby with cotton reels on the floor, to the adjoining apartment, into what Mr. Price called his private or business room.

Lawyer Lumley carefully closed the door behind him as they entered, took a seat opposite his employé, then drew from his pocket the very envelope which that very morning he

had received from Colonel Vander Meulen's messenger in town.

Then he took out the three portraits and silently handed them to Mr. Price.

For some minutes the factor long and steadily examined the three cards. Then in the lamplight, his face full of meaning, without uttering a single word, Mr. Price very slowly raised his eyes, till face to face, they and Mr. Lumley's met.

"Well?" the lawyer asked. "Can you tell me whose is that face?"

"Yes—I can."

There was as he spoke a quiet deep mysteriousness in Mr. Price's tone.

"Whose?"

"Why it is the likeness of Michael Sullivan, his beyond a doubt."

"Michael Sullivan; who is he?"

"Well, he was employed here, sir."

"*Was* employed here? When did he cease

to be employed here? and where is he now?"

"He left here several weeks ago, sir; but where he is now, I don't know."

"At what work was he employed here?"

"As a carpenter, sir; he was a house carpenter by trade."

"What was his character?"

"Well, sir, he was a quiet man, and a good workman, kept himself pretty much to himself, but as to his character I never saw anything amiss."

"Had he a family?"

"No, sir; he was alone, said he was unmarried and lived in half of the cottage occupied by old widow Gerrish. At first he lodged at Brown's up at the West Farm, but some unpleasantness arising between them I gave him the unoccupied rooms under the same roof where widow Gerrish lives, and she did for him."

“ But do you know whence he came ? ”

“ I do not, sir ; he came and offered here some eighteen months or two year ago, and as I wanted a good carpenter, and he seemed a steady man and a good workman I have employed him ever since.”

“ Why did he leave ? ”

“ He gave no reasons sir, other than that he wanted a change and said he was going to Chester.”

Then there was a long silent pause as the two men sat there in the dim uncertain lamp light of the little quiet room. A pause during which Mr. Price, whatever was passing in his mind, said nothing, but waited further developments, and during which the lawyer's head was bent, his sallow face looking almost ghastly, almost deathly in the imperfect illumination of the dim lamp in its unusual pallor, and his eyes were long and steadily fixed upon the worn carpeted floor.

Then again he raised his head.

"Who has lived in the rooms occupied by Sullivan since he left?" he asked.

"No one, sir; they have been void, old widow Gerrish has lived under the same roof, but she has occupied the adjacent half of the cottage alone."

Then again Mr. Lumley relapsed into thought.

"I want you to drive me over to Gladborough," he said at length. "I suppose I can get accommodation for to-night at the Prince's Arms."

And that, without going into a further discussion of the case, leaving Mr. Price as much, if not rather more mystified than at first, brought the *tête-à-tête* in Mr. Price's little room to a close.

In less than a quarter of an hour after that the London lawyer and Mr. Price, behind the latter's fast trotting cob, were passing along

through the chill October evening air, along the road towards the clean little country town of Gladborough, some two miles from Vernwood.

Then after requesting the steward to meet him there again with his trap at nine o'clock on the following morning, Mr. Lumley soon found himself the only guest before the great bright coffee-room fire at the Prince's Arms family and commercial hotel at Gladborough, enjoying something more toothsome than poor homely Mrs. Price's hard-boiled eggs and tea.

As Mr. Price, after wishing his superior a respectful "good-night," turned his cob's head round, and in his open smart little dog-cart made the best of his way homeward through the chilly frosty night air, many thoughts, many things, many conjectures passed through his perplexed mind. And that night late, when their brats of boys and girls were put to bed, he and Mrs. Price held a council of conjectures beyond their usual early hour of retiring

as they sat over the dying embers of the quiet country kitchen fire.

It is almost unnecessary to tell what the hopes and fears and conjectures of these two good people were.

Mr. Lumley did little that night but enjoy the warmth and comfort and glow of the bright cheery Prince's Arms coffee-room fire.

There was one thing however that the London lawyer did do !

It was near ten o'clock, and Mr. Lumley, having well warmed his outer man, and well lined and fortified his inner man with something more grateful and comforting than hard-boiled eggs and tea, sallied forth from the Prince's Arms yard into the dismal dead-alive solitude and solemnity of the little country town street.

Following two or three quirks or turnings he found himself before a rather long, low, new-looking building of massive stone, this he entered, and there, although there was a good

fire, in a rather cold-looking, rather repellent looking office or room, around which in the shape of handcuffs, manacles, cutlasses, and truncheons, hung various trophies and implements of the human chase, before a desk-table, busily writing reports, sat no other than our tall dignified acquaintance, Mr. Superintendent Whittier, who had under such ignominious conditions, some months before, taken so prominent though mistaken a part in poor Jules Massey's arrest.

The superintendent was but little changed from the tall kindly dignified officer as we knew him, except that Monk having quite failed to leave a whole garment on his official back, he had, at the expense of his county, to be provided with a completely new outfit of official clothes.

But we mention this only incidentally by the way.

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It was in the cold raw murk of the October morning of the following day that the three personalities to whom we have lately had to refer—namely, Mr. Lumley, Mr. Superintendent Whittier, and Mr. Price—again met.

Although of course nobody had mentioned a word—nobody in the world of rumour ever does mention a word—yet in that inexplicable way in which reports and rumours generate and fly, dark sinister echoes again hung, as it were like some uncanny contagion in the Vernwood air.

But now, however, the malicious busy tongues of slander or report over the Vernwood tragedy were for ever to be stilled.

After a short consultation in the cold morning held in Mr. Price's comfortless little room, accompanied by a labourer with some tools, the three men left the factor's house and walked off through the Vernwood lanes.

The damp and dripping dews of autumn

hung heavily upon the hedges, the grass, and the trees, as the three or four men passed on their errand along the wooded road.

At last, after a walk of nearly a mile from Mr. Price's house they reached the sequestered cottage now occupied by Widow Gerrish alone.

It was an isolated sequestered domicile, thickly surrounded by, nay almost buried in dense low underwood and high leafy trees. But, as Mr. Price had told the lawyer, some of the rooms, having a separate entrance, were now untenanted and void.

The men gained an entrance. The house was furnished after a fashion, and here and there domestic utensils lay negligently placed about, had been left uncleaned and unused,—imparting to the aspect of the interior a desolate neglected air.

First they ascended to the upper or domiciliary apartments of the abode,—which presented an aspect much in keeping with those underneath.

Commencing at once in a kind of upper storey or attic, from floor to floor, Mr. Superintendent Whittier instituted a thorough and searching investigation of every cupboard, shelf, corner, nook, and cranny of the abode.

After half an hour's careful investigation the search for anything which could throw light on the sad history of the past, seemed vain, and it seemed like being barren of results.

The superintendent then directed his attention to the kitchen floor of newly laid boards, but although they displayed not the least sign of removal since the floor was re-made, yet with the help of the workman and tools he set to work and one by one lifted them up from the joists, thus exposing directly to view the earthen foundation beneath.

But, strange to say, the earth beneath the centre of the room seemed looser than the surrounding soil.

Following the instructions of the superinten-

dent, the labourer continued to delve between the joists down into the loose friable mould to a depth of several feet, while the London lawyer and Mr. Price looked on with curious and interested gaze.

At length the limits of the loose mould narrowed down to about one foot in width, and there carefully concealed under a heavy flagstone, Mr. Superintendent Whittier and the workman came upon what was a damning find, it was the damning, condemning, indisputable, link which so seldom seems quite absent in the chain of evidence, the fatal blunder in the operation, by which the murderer seems ever as if by some inscrutable law, some strange unaccountable oversight or act of forgetfulness, to reveal his trail, for there out of the depths of some five feet of loosened earth was brought to the light of day a garment of the oilskin kind, which it needed no chemical analysis to prove, needed scarcely a second examination

of the unassisted eye to determine, had been almost deluged with blood; not only so but rolled up in this garment was a long, murderous-looking bowie knife, of Spanish shape and make, with a lacquered ornamented blade,—and it needed no further testimony to tell the tale of how, and by whose hand Bertram Gonault, the Master of Vernwood, had died.

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We need not pursue farther the details of that morning's work. Mr. Superintendent Whittier took charge of the condemning possessions, treasuring them with well-nigh as much care as if he had unearthed some long buried crock or casket filled with precious ore or gems.

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But we will turn to another phase of our tale.

Between the cities of London and New York there is some five hours' difference in time. That is to say, when time-pieces denote nine o'clock in the morning in New York, it

is, in London, about two hours past mid-day ; thus, when New Yorkers first set about their daily labour, the London working day is some five hours old.

This difference forms an important factor in the work of commerce and civilization and finance, a factor which is, and is destined to make an important item in the making of the western world.

Thus it was on the damp October day in the which the discovery had been made beneath the floor of the cottage lately occupied by Michael Sullivan, or as we know his true name to be, Michael Jervois ; so great is the triumph of science and invention, that almost before the New York world on that same day dawned, Michael Jervois, for having wilfully murdered Bertram Gonault was arrested in New York.

* * * * *

But once again on the magic wing of thought we will bridge over the rolling tide in the ever

shifting currents of events, of time and space, we have again once more to change it to an episode which is ever saddening, is deeply saddening whether contemplated in reality or romance.

It is assize time in the county town within twenty miles of Vernwood.

The entrances to the Courts of Justice are jealously guarded and closely thronged with an excited miscellaneous throng.

There has an eager overbrooding sadness, a morbid expectancy come upon the popular throng, for it is a foregone conclusion that one person within the precincts of that solid massive substantial structure must requite his sin with his life, for there, in the place of the accused and the condemned, for whom all the hope of this world has gone out and ceased,—stands before his earthly judge, at last the true and proven murderer of Bertram Gonault, Michael Jervois.

The dark man Jules Massey is there too,

standing in the very same court in which so few, so very few months before, he was to have been tried for that very crime.

But this time Jules Massey,—even in court the great dog Monk by his side,—instead of being prisoner, poses now as a principal witness against the accused.

Jules Massey tells how alone, in the solitary chamber, in the silence of the moonlit summer night he watched by his sick, raving, perhaps dying master's side. In graphic language he tells of his late master's wild vision of his delirium, the dead white hand, of the raving delirious patient's dark presentiment of evil, such as by some western Indian witch doctress had been foretold to him in the wild mystic jargon of witchcraft, "when midnight music sounded at the rising of the moon."

Then he told the court how, as he stood out upon the broad lawn, he heard the startled pheasant rise from the bushes, and the subdued

rustle among the leaves, the significance of which was now as clear to him as the light of day.

Then Jules went on to tell the story of his own arrest, and his own narrow escape, he told of the startled mysterious fright of the horse Ranger, of the intense restless excitement of the great dog.

Then he told how on the snowy October morning he went to the mausoleum, told about the finding of his late master's body, as it lay deeply buried hidden beneath the snow, by the St. Bernard dog, now standing by his side,—told of the very body stolen from the grave, told of the robbery from the person of the dead, of the sapphire ring from his dead master's hand.

As the court listened with rapt attention to the black man's recital of facts now clear to all, it was to them as the recital of some strange, weird, wild romance.

At last all those horrid grim formalities came to an end.

Then at last was the sentence uttered.

“Michael Sullivan! It is not my sentence which I pronounce on you, but the sentence of the law. You shall be taken from the prison whence you came, and thence to the place of execution and hung by the neck till you are dead. Amen.”

Here again must the veil fall.

* * * * *

It was the grey dawn of an early November morning when within the privacy of the prison walls a little procession was being formed.

It was stated vaguely by the press that the convict was resigned, that he was repentant, that he had spent all the fast-ebbing hours of his life penning an account, or in prayer, that the kindly ministrations upon him of the two holy fathers of his Church, who by turns since his conviction had never left his cell, had

melted the hardened heart, in short it was said that the culprit had confessed.

The last sacrament had been administered. "*De profundis te domine clamavi, clamavi*" ("Out of the depths, O Lord, I have cried ; * I have cried to Thee").

And then in the grey dawn of that November morning, at the common hangman's hands was requited the death, and for the murder of Bertram Gonault his murderer Michael Sullivan died.

CHAPTER V.

“DE PROFUNDIS.”

FOR the wilful murder, or let us call it butchery, in all its heartless cold-blooded dexterity, of the Master of Vernwood, the body of his assassin Michael Sullivan *alias* Jervois had not lain so much as one twelve hours in the dust of an unhallowed grave ere Colonel Vander Meulen knew, as far as by human knowledge could be known, each act, almost each word and thought of the last hours of the culprit's life.

His protestations of innocence, or his confessions of guilt, of the brighter moments when rays of hopefulness at times broke through the rifts in the awful cloud, or some faint light glimmered beyond the gloom of the dark valley of shadow through which he was condemned to

pass; of those dark hours wherein the great unfathomable future of eternity was an utter immeasurable void, without even the scintillation from its depths of a single guiding star, the present void, the future hopeless, the past remorse.

All this, with the usual perspicuity, the usual insight into the depths of human lives and events which made him such a consummate master of his profession, the New York detective Keinrich Vander Meulen had quickly got to know.

In our last chapter we said enough to show that Sullivan or Jervois had lived, had died, had confessed, had received absolution, had passed from this life to a life beyond, to Purgatory or to Paradise, amid the consolations and ministrations of the Roman Catholic Faith.

Born as he was, a Frenchman by his father and Irish on his maternal side, brought zealously up in the tenets of the Romish faith, he had no

idea of any other than what in his eyes was the true and only real belief to trust in for the salvation of his soul, and the Church, ever watchful and anxious for the spiritual well-being of her children, whether innocent or erring, lagged not to impart its spiritual consolations to the fallen and the condemned.

Hence, day nor night had the two priests whose painful office it was to minister to the unhappy culprit's spiritual necessities, been absent from the condemned man's cell.

Whatever Colonel Vander Meulen knew, whatever means he had employed to learn, it is scarcely our privilege, it may not be within our ability, to look too closely behind the veil.

The press, the busy mouthpiece of the world, gave to its public many conflicting and contradictory accounts. It was said that the murderer of Bertram Gonault had confessed all, that he had made a clean breast of his deed, it was said that he had on the morning of his

execution, at the last moment placed a sealed document—to be opened only after he had ceased to live—in his confessor's hands.

Such was vaguely said.

But if that was truly and really so, like as the murderer's remains were buried in the oblivion of an unhallowed grave, to be forgotten or to be remembered only in dishonour, or chronicled in the annals of crime, so likewise any written confession that he ever penned, except to be examined in official secrecy and pigeon-holed, to pass for ever from human eyes and human remembrance, never saw the light.

"The man was dead," so argued straight-backed officialism and blind-eyed red-tape, "and whether he were innocent or guilty the die had been cast, and no human power could bring him back to life, therefore it mattered not to the outer world what were his final acts or protestations during his life."

As a matter of fact rumour was not completely

wrong, and previous to his decease the murderer Michael Jervois had actually placed in the hands of his confessors and spiritual advisers, a document written and sealed, to be opened only after his demise.

And almost every word in this document, although it was never published, by some mysterious means, through some mysterious channel, that genius in his calling, Keinrich Vander Meulen very quickly,—as we have said ere the writer had been twelve hours dead,—knew.

How exactly that came to be we will not venture too particularly to surmise or to impart, but this much we may tell, from being in his religion, as necessity demanded of any faith which man ever hoped or believed in for the salvation of his soul, or from being, as circumstances required, of no faith at all, with that mutability which enabled him to adapt himself to all circumstances, to be all things to all men, to suit himself as naturally and easily to surround-

ing requirements as every hovering changing shadow causes the chameleon to vary the hue of his skin, Colonel Vander Meulen became a convert to the Church of Rome, as zealous and devout a proselyte as ever dipped in holy water or knelt before an altar at High Mass.

But without concerning ourselves with this, without intruding too curiously within the sacred veil of the confessional which hung around the dark precincts of the murderer's cell, ignoring avowals which under its solemn ban might have been uttered in sacerdotal ears, and which no anointed priest of the Romish Church under pain of penalties or ostracism may divulge, we may tell only what we know.

And the document which the murderer Michael Sullivan penned before his death, and which he placed in the hands of the young priest Father Lyola, who administered the last rites and sacraments and consolations which his Church could bestow, was this.

CONFESSION OF MICHAEL JERVOIS.

“ I, Michael Jervois, make this in writing my
“ last confession before my death, and for my
“ sins may the Lord through the blessed Virgin
“ Mary Mother of God have mercy on my
“ soul.

“ As before many days or many hours I must
“ die, and even now it seems as if the grave
“ yawns open to receive my body before my
“ very eyes, I now desire to unburden my con-
“ science, as far as confession can, by an avowal
“ of my guilt and sin, and the great crime which
“ weighs so heavily upon my soul.

“ In the sight of God, trusting in the inter-
“ cession of the blessed Virgin, I hereby
“ confess that I murdered my master Bertram
“ Gonault. And for the crime it is just that I
“ should die.

“ But while I acknowledge the justness of the
“ sentence which has been passed upon me by
“ the law, I protest and confess that the crime

"for which I am about to suffer had not been
"planned or carried out of my own free will, of
"any malice prepense, and in this I protest that
"I am innocent of the sin.

"I confess my weakness, and in my weakness
"I have been but a tool in other hands in com-
"mitting so fearful a deed, but for this weakness
"I own it is but just that I should die.

"And now as I stand on the very brink of
"the grave, on the threshold of an eternity
"which seems to open so vast and dark and
"hopeless in my spiritual sight, I swear that I
"owed my master no ill-will, and being now
"beyond the fear or vengeance of man, and
"having only to reckon with my God who must
"deal as seemeth Him good with my immortal
"soul, I write the following account and history
"of my crime.

"Some two or three years ago when work-
"ing at my trade in the City of Mexico I was
"inveigled into blindly taking the oath of

“allegiance, fidelity, and obedience to the tenets
“of a secret fraternity calling themselves ‘The
“Sons of Cain.’ I took the oath I say blindly.
“And so it was. I was not long within the
“pale of this society of ‘The Sons of Cain’ ere
“I discovered that while their professed *raison*
“*d’être* was good fellowship, social enjoyment,
“and apparently harmless pleasures, yet beneath
“this surface, and within its inner circle, the
“hands of ‘The Sons of Cain,’ like those of
“the scriptural prototype after whom they called
“themselves, were deeply dyed with crime and
“blood—human blood—and instead of the
“innocent pursuits which they professed, the
“real and veritable business of the affiliation
“was murder, robbery, assassination, crime.

“When I saw the dangerous society into
“which I had fallen I would have withdrawn,
“I would have cut off my hand if it could have
“disunited me with such men. But it was as
“the snare into which the bird flies unwittingly,

"or as the barbed arrow which has entered the
"flesh, easy to enter but practically impossible
"to withdraw.

"Within the inner circle of this fraternity, I
"heard murder and crime discussed with all
"the *sang froid* and deliberation with which
"men of business or men of the world discuss
"the prospects of trade or agriculture, or the
"fluctuations of the exchange. Not only so,
"but I found that this Mexican murder society
"was the parent stem from which ramified
"certain offshoots existing in New York,
"London, and several other of the more im-
"portant American and European cities. But
"their aim and object everywhere was the
"same, murder, robbery, violence, crime.

"Within the inner circle of the order, the
"movements of the great and wealthy both of
"the New World and the Old were known by
"a system of espionage as dark and secret and
"mysterious as it was complete.

“ I will not now disclose the many crimes
“ which I could unfold and heard discussed.

“ I had not been so much as six months a
“ member of the criminal fraternity when I was
“ chosen by ballot for the perpetration of a
“ crime—a murder.

“ As the details of what was expected of me
“ were imparted to me I shrunk with horror
“ from the deed. But there was no holding
“ back, no turning aside ; as is common with
“ such fraternities my own life would have been
“ the exacted penalty of my refusal, of any
“ faltering in my obedience or suspicion of in-
“ fidelity to the voted decrees of ‘ The Sons of
“ Cain.’

“ But while its decisions were systematically
“ arrived at by ballot and immutable, yet it was
“ left to the arrangement of individual members
“ of the fraternity, or what may be called sub-
“ committees to carry out its designs.

“ I was instructed in the *rôle* which I was

“expected to perform by two of the secret
“brotherhood, whose names—as strange to
“relate we knew each other within the Council
“only by astronomical terms—I never knew.

“But that which struck me as most remark-
“able, was the exact and marvellous similarity,
“the one to the other, of the two men who
“were my instructors in the deed which I was
“expected to perform. In stature, in com-
“plexion, in age, in features, in voice, in
“manner, even in dress, the one was a repeti-
“tion a *fac-simile* of the other, so startling and
“striking was the similarity of form and face.
“There could be no doubt but they were the
“children of the same parents born on the same
“day.

“But the order which I received, and which
“being the unanimous vote of the assembled
“fraternity was irrevocable and imperative,
“filled me with dismay.

“My orders were these.

“Accompanied by the two men who had
“been my instructors, I was to proceed from
“the city of Mexico to New York, and thence
“if necessary to cross the ocean to Europe, and
“accomplish the death of a young man who
“would be pointed out to me.

“Under what pretext, what sin he had committed in the eyes of ‘The Sons of Cain’ to
“merit death, I could not comprehend. But
“now I know that his sin in their eyes was the
“possession of greater wealth than the plotters
“against his life possessed.

“A few days after receiving the orders of
“the fraternity, in company with the two men
“who had been my instructors I left Mexico.

“We arrived in the city of New York where
“a secret conference between the members of
“the fraternity,—but to which I was not admitted,—brought about some alteration in our
“plans, and one of my two companions informed me that he should cross with me to

"Europe, while his brother—as I can but call
"him —would remain in New York.

"In due time we reached London, and soon,
"in that great meeting and conference ground
"of all sects and societies both bad and good, I
"found myself in company with a fraternity of
"villains, Americans, English, Irish, Germans,
"and Russians no less murderous seditious and
"lawless than the clique of the same order with
"whom I had become so fatally entangled in
"the cities of Mexico and New York. Oh the
"unhappy day! With these men I spent my
"days carousing, for however obtained, there
"was never any lack of funds among 'The Sons
"of Cain,' and I found myself fast sinking to
"the level of those with whom I spent my
"nights and days.

"At last one day, in one of two gentlemen
"issuing from a club in St. James' Street in
"front of which we had been loitering and
"watching, was pointed out to me the young

“man, whose destruction I was voted to accomplish in Mexico. He was handsome, tall, fashionably dressed, with dark Spanish looking complexion and features, and I was informed was the owner of enormous wealth.

“It would take too long (my last hours are ebbing too rapidly away) to tell in detail the machinations by which, making use of my trade as a guise I got employment on my late master’s estate, got access to the mansion, knew every room, chamber, passage of the house. The complete knowledge which I was gaining took many months to acquire, but I knew that I was playing and scheming for enormous stakes. What led me to these conclusions more readily, what again to me looked another remarkable coincidence, as I got to know my master the owner of Vernwood intimately, was again his great personal resemblance to the two men who, as I have already said, had been my instructors in plot-

"ting his death. It even occurred to me if they
"could be brothers, but even to this hour I can-
"not tell.

"At last the night in which I resolved to
"carry out my bloody action came. It was a
"fresh, pure, unclouded, summer night, a night
"too pure and beauteous to be sullied and
"overshadowed with so black a crime.

"Midnight had passed when I stole from
"my cottage, hiding, secreting myself in the
"shadows of the trees from the almost un-
"clouded rays and brilliancy of the harvest
"moon, till I reached a spot on the lawn within
"a few yards of where I knew my master
"lay.

"I could hear his ravings, his delirious
"laughter, I knew he was helpless and weak.

"I saw the dark servant issue from his sick
"master's chamber, I feared I must have been
"discovered, so near to me in the moonlight
"the black man stood.

“The rest is known. As my thoughts approach it I shut my eyes in horror, if possible to shut out the scene. But it cannot, cannot be, it must haunt me to the end.

“I lived on as before, to the outer world unchanged, but over my inmost soul there hung the dark shadow, which made me wish myself ten thousand leagues away. The awful terror of the consciousness of my guilt and crime! Oh who can portray the murderer’s night thoughts, the remembrance of the victim’s terror-stricken face, the ghastly visions of gore-stained hands, and now above all the gaping eternity of an angered insatiable hell.

“As alone, night by night I lay in my cottage thickly surrounded and canopied as it were with woodland leaves and trees, who can picture my mental agony and remorse: in every sighing wind which shook the trees I heard my dying victim’s moan, to my terrified senses the midnight cry of the screech owl

"was distorted into some demoniacal hellish
"wail.

"Suspicion raged around me, but I—I the true
"murderer of my master escaped untouched,
"unscathed by its damning breath.

"Then with renewed agony I saw the
"coloured man Massey arrested, and tried,
"suffering for the crime which I had com-
"mitted. His suffering punished me all the
"more as I knew how faithful he was to his
"trust, as I knew that—far from murdering his
"master—he would have died to save his
"master's life.

"The beauteous world of Vernwood around
"me became in my sight as a very hell, but I
"must remain, for I knew that a hasty departure
"would at once direct attention and suspicion
"on to my own head.

"But when, in cooler moments, I came to
"ponder over my deed. What? I asked myself,
"what but woe and agony of spirit, 'what shred

“ of advantage had I won by the committal of
“ my crime ? ’ And the tempting devil whisper-
“ ing in my ear answered not one shred. ‘ Man,
“ what hast thou gained ? not one shred. ’

“ Then, in that perversity wherein the tempter
“ returns ever to the assault of the weak and
“ fallen soul, like the harpy which attacks the
“ weakling lamb, and Satan ever forsakes his
“ own, I again was tempted.

“ It was I who, acting as house carpenter at
“ Vernwood, was called in to screw down my
“ master’s coffin lid ere it was committed to the
“ grave, and as I did so I saw that as his hand
“ rested across his bosom upon his long white
“ finger there was enclosed, and to be buried
“ with the dead, the costly jewel which he wore
“ on the ring finger of his left hand, and of this,
“ with that fatal perversity my misleading demon
“ tempted me to covet the possession.

“ Emboldened and hardened by my first sin,
“ by the accomplishment of his death, I need

“scarcely tell how at night I proceeded to my
“late master’s grave in the mausoleum, how I
“dug down to the coffined dead, and then turned
“back the screws by which I knew I had so
“recently coffined the body in its intended long
“last bed, I looked again on my master’s face,
“from his finger I stole the costly ring.

“With the great bodily strength which I
“possess, urged by my demon to so damnable
“an act, I dragged first the body and then the
“coffin from the grave. Again and again I
“committed insane and fatal blunders as every
“murderer does; for Satan ever forsakes his
“own.

“Possessed thus of the coveted valuable, I
“took the earliest opportunity which I could
“do without exciting suspicion, of quitting both
“Vernwood and England; and only congratulated myself with being beyond danger when
“I landed again in New York.

“I re-entered there the New York Lodge of

“the brotherhood of ‘The Sons of Cain’ and
“was congratulated on what I had done.

“I congratulated myself too, but my self-
“satisfaction and congratulation came too soon,
“for ere I had been long in the American city
“I walked into the trap which had been so
“adroitly set.

“And this I sign as being the true con-
“fession of

“MICHAEL SULLIVAN, *alias* MICHAEL JERVOIS.”

Such, somewhat curtailed, but reproduced substantially in our language rather than in the imperfect phraseology of the writer, was the purport of the penned confession of his guilt which came, by some means, into the American detective Vander Meulen’s hands, and it threw for his benefit as it throws for ours, considerable light on the once mysterious Vernwood “case.”

But Colonel Vander Meulen felt that his work was not done, he felt that his elucidation of the

enigma was not yet complete, that much in the eyes of the world was still unexplained, he felt that although justice had been dealt out to the guilty, yet to maintain his place on the high pinnacle of reputation upon which it stood, yet more remained. He felt too, more than ever, that the opinion which he had entertained, that the confidence which he had reposed in his helper, Paul Neugass, the little ferret man as we have called him, personally insignificant as he looked and seemed, had not been misplaced, for however insignificant and despised any one of us may seem to be, let him not despair, let him be assured that there is a mission and a place for him in life.

CHAPTER VI.

A WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

BUT while these things were happening in England, events which will bring to a crisis, a consummation, and, as far as this book is concerned our narration of its incidents to a close were rapidly maturing in the city of New York.

That which is known upon the map of New York City as East Twenty-seventh Street is also but less familiarly known by another name, a name conveying with it a sense of human sorrow and human suffering, it is likewise called "*via doloris*," "the way of sorrow" or "the street of tears," and from the many forms of human suffering which pass along it, it is not by this name of sadness inaptly called.

As is the case with most of the other streets on the eastern side of the Empire City, the eastern extremity of this "way of sorrow" is bounded by the rushing rolling turbulent flood of the East River, to which at intervals, we have had to refer from almost the beginning to the end of our tale.

Right down at the end of this street on what is known as First Avenue, by which it is cut at right angles, built down almost upon the very water's edge, stands a huge massive edifice, or rather a group of massive buildings of hard blue stone, as strong and durable in construction as if almost they were designed to resist some hostile invasion or a siege. But since that area of the North American Continent known collectively as the United States is quite large enough to accommodate comfortably any reasonable host of hostile forces which may appear on its horizon, and to invite them to a friendly banquet, or if it felt so disposed without

any inconvenience at all to its vast resources, to a five o'clock tea, probably siege resisting fortifications in the vicinity of New York are less of a grim reality and more an ornamental name.

But still the massive structure to which we have referred has had doubtless much to do towards imparting to its adjacent thoroughfare the title of "the street of tears," for surrounded on every side by iron palings, high and strong, there stands here the institution known as Belle Vue Hospital, an institution dedicated to the assuasion and mitigation of all the long and melancholy category of humanity's physical sufferings and woes.

But as if this were not enough to impart to the adjacent street its doleful name, beyond the Belle Vue Hospital and standing, built upon a framework of massive wooden piles, beneath which the current of the East River actually flows, a building of obvious intent, erected

and named in imitation of a similar place in the capital of France as a temporary reception and resting place of the bodies of the unknown dead, there stands the New York "Morgue," for like every other great city, New York has its hidden, unrecorded, unutterable tales of human woes, its tales of anguish and sorrow too heavy for human flesh and blood to bear, ended perhaps by the revolver, perchance by the assassin's knife or the secret crime.

But unlike its Parisian prototype, the Morgue of New York is a plain, square, wooden, frame structure without any ornamental or architectural pretence, erected upon a platform laid over piles driven into the bed of the river, and quite isolated from the land.

From this platform, across the East River in a funeral boat to the cemeteries and interment grounds beyond Long Island City, there sails on its final voyage, the corpse of many a one whose earthly career has closed in

darkness, hidden shame, or by the hand of crime.

And within those massive walls of Belle Vue Hospital lay one, some of the threads of whose life are interwoven with the weft of our tale, for here, week after week following the fire which we shortly described in Long Island City, lay the man Mervil Garnier in his sufferings upon a bed of pain.

The *New York World* reporter's graphic and minute account, of how Mervil Garnier perished in his brave attempt to save his lover Kathleen Venner's life, drawn in skilful word-painting as it was in all its sensational details, in all its graphic pathetically told elements of romance, was not quite true.

It was not true, therefore it was a lie.

By one of those hairbreadth escapes, one of those miraculous interpositions of Providence—because to the intelligent mind there exists no such thing as chance,—although, together

with the fall of the charred and burning fabric of the frame house, the woman Kathleen Venner and her preserver had been precipitated apparently to inevitable destruction like as if into a furious cauldron of flame, yet both man and woman had escaped with life; escaped without injury they had not; for although the woman, by a more miraculous protection extended to her was comparatively almost unhurt, yet her preserver Mervil Garnier came very near indeed to paying for his temerity with his life.

For many weeks Mervil Garnier lay in Belle Vue Hospital, he lay there, his life uncertain, like one suspended by a mere gossamer thread over the mouth of the grave.

But in the end medical science and skilful treatment, aided by his own natural physical strength, won the grim race against death, and as he had saved Kathleen Venner his lover, so she yearned in her ministrations to snatch him

from the grave, from the very jaws of death, for what miracles cannot woman accomplish in the strength and fidelity of her love.

And now, day by day through convalescence, Mervil Garnier was regaining and returning to a newness of life.

* * * *

But while Mervil Garnier was thus regaining life there was darkening and closing around him, as some web entangling his footsteps, an ever thickening cloud.

It must not be for a moment supposed that in all the weeks of Vander Meulen's absence from New York, that Paul Neugass, in the hours and days of semi-inactivity into which he was thereby forced, it must not be imagined that he had not pretty completely fathomed and disentangled all the mysterious circumstances connecting the man Garnier, with the Long Island City fire. It must not be imagined that

he did not know of the man's whereabouts, his present state of recovery, of convalescence, and of his previous narrow escape with his life. And the use to which Paul Neugass turned his knowledge we will proceed to weave into the tangled web of our tale.

The exquisite dyes of the Indian summer like the European tints of autumn, were passing away, and the shadows of evening were falling over New York City and State, when we must again revert to a phase of our story now so nearly told.

Within the precincts of Belle Vue Hospital situated at the foot of East Twenty-seventh Street in the city of New York to which we have in cursory sentences already referred, Mervil Garnier (or the man whom we know by that name), although on the way to recovery, was still suffering from the effects of his narrow escape.

For many weeks had he suffered exquisite

tortures, but this acute stage, thanks to skilful treatment of his wounds, had passed.

Strange to tell the woman Kathleen Venner, for whom,—whatever the relations between them were,—he entertained a strong affection, an affection which was returned with the strength of a woman's love, when with the falling framework and timbers of the burning domicile in Long Island City both were dashed into what was a roaring sea of flame, strange to tell, the preserver came within a shadow as it were of losing his life, while the woman, his lover, Kathleen Venner, whom he risked his life to save from destruction, came through and out of the terrible ordeal of flame, and the terrible danger comparatively unhurt, almost by fire unscathed. And now through days and nights of agony and convalescence, as far as the rules of the Institution allowed, day by day and night by night, she was tending his wants with all the solicitude of a woman's passion and a woman's love.

But this we will pass over for another view of the scene.

While Kathleen Venner ministered daily to her lover Mervil Garnier's necessities, as far as she could, in Belle Vue Hospital, while she visited him in his pain, while she smoothed his pillow, or with luscious fruits moistened his parched tongue, with a womanly instinct,—if we may call it so,—an instinct which is even a higher attribute than reason, she came to know that a great cloud was rising at first no bigger than a man's hand upon their horizon, which threatened to surround, to engulph his and their life and lives.

Although she loved him with a woman's love, yet she knew that there was much in his life which was obscured in mystery, was hidden from her eyes, for woman's love, too often for her own good, like the enfolded eyes of Justice, shuts out the light of reason and is blind, for love is the subtlest attribute of our nature, while

possessing much that is beautiful, heavenly, angelic, saint-like, yet is full of anomalies which we cannot fathom, for while love is the sharpest eyed of all human passions, yet it is blind.

And so Kathleen Venner, although she loved Mervil Garnier with a woman's love, yet with a woman's intuition she became sensible that some danger loomed, lowered very darkly and threateningly, across the horizon of his life.

How she became thus sensible of danger impending we shall not attempt to say, but there is a knowledge deeply hidden, deeply imbedded down in the profounder depths of natures both brute and human which we call intuition when we apply the term to a human being, and which we call instinct when we apply it to a brute.

Although the subject is one on which we might enlarge infinitely, yet we must perforce leave it and pass on.

And while this woman ministered to the

man's daily necessities she was the sentinel which watched for danger with a restless vigil and sleepless eyes.

But the cloud which we have said was no bigger than a man's hand appeared on their horizon, was rapid in its development, and notwithstanding Kathleen Venner's watchfulness, was quick to enlarge, to expand, and to burst.

It was in the cold twilight of the November evening, that suddenly, as she sat in her poorly ill-furnished third floor lodgings, at no great space from where her lover lay, that she became aware of the impending bursting of the storm.

A bribed female caller had whispered something in her ear which caused the blood which coursed through her veins to chase more quickly, to run cold, and her ears to tingle, and her heart to beat more quickly for him she loved.

She rushed from the miserable room which was now all she called her own, for her home

and her belongings she had lost, escaping only—and barely with that—with her lover and her life, she rushed to where he lay, or rather to where he now sat in a convalescent ward. And quickly she reached his side.

“For God’s sake,” breathlessly she half whispered in his ear, “come hence. Escape for your life.”

Then she half dragged, half supported him from the ward, through the wide passages, and corridors of the hospital, past where the janitors should have stopped their exit, but by some inscrutable interposition of the hand of Providence they were unobserved or allowed to pass, till still, half urging, half dragging, she gained with her burden the outer gate, and then past the high strong iron palings by which the massive structure of the Hospital is surrounded on every side, they stood in the street and as she thought free to hasten him away.

But Kathleen Venner’s heart seemed to leap

into her mouth, her brain seemed to whirl, as instead of aiding her lover in his escape from justice she seemed to have dragged him into the very jaws of death, or into the very hands of those who hunted for his liberty and his life, for within fifty paces of the spot where they stood upon the pavement, there hurried along in the direction of the hospital from whence the lovers had just come, Paul Neugass with two men whom she recognised only too surely as being officers of the New York City Police.

In her extremity, in the weakened state of her lover, she saw the apparently inevitable, she scarcely saw one glimmer of hope. Then she dragged him down the street to the brink of the surging flood of the East River, and then right on to the wooden framework over the rushing tide upon which stood that plain sinister wooden structure which we have already spoken of the New York Morgue, hoping within its dark shadows to escape.

But it was a vain, a slender, a forlorn hope.

A glance over her shoulder told her that the sharp eyes which she so dreaded were upon them, they were recognised by Paul Neugass and his confederates and pursued.

Was there no hope? Was all despair?

Beneath the wooden framework of the foundations of the Morgue building, the rushing rolling tide of the East River dashed, and surged, and foamed past them with all the turbulence of its rushing seaward flow, veritably a boiling chilling flood.

But slender as the chance was it seemed to be the pursued man's only hope.

In his days of perfect health and strength Mervil Garnier could have plunged with confidence, could have stemmed and fought and overcome the tide, could have swum without danger of failure of his strength to the opposite shore, but now he was weakened.

Death behind him! Death before!

Which death should he choose ? was a question she then momentarily asked.

But he preferred the mercy of the merciless sea scant as it was, to his chances of mercy at the hands of man.

There was a plunge from the framework platform of the Morgue and in the semi-gloom of that cold American October night he disappeared from view.

The woman Kathleen Venner fell upon her knees in the coldness of the night and clasping her hands she stretched them heavenward.

“ O God ! O heaven ! ” she ejaculated, “ preserve his life. O God, preserve his life ! ”

Scarcely had Mervil Garnier escaped ere Paul Neugass and his men were upon her as with their own eyes they saw the enactment of the perilous scene, and raving at their loss.

For the second time have we had to tell in this story that the East River receiving into

its cold embrace, had cheated the little ferret man of his prey.

Paul Neugass stamped, he raved, he cursed, he swore. But of what avail?

But the poor body of Mervil Garnier ! What shall we tell of that ! Tossed on the turbulent dancing waves as their veriest plaything, their veriest toy, thrown hither, dashed thither, the body of Mervil Garnier, towards the great broad boundless swelling ocean, senseless, his body drifted out with the tide.

CHAPTER VII.

MORE LIGHT.

WHILE thus, as if by the infallible will of heaven the light of its omniscience shines athwart the gloom, dispelling into the clearness of day the dark clouds which once hung about the mystery of the Vernwood tragedy with the impenetrable density of a pall; while the true assassin of Bertram Gonault had been brought to light and justice by the instrumentality in the hands of Providence of so humble an agent as a dog, while justice had claimed her own, the murderer's sin had been avenged, and his crime had been requited with his life, while this had been accomplished yet other circumstances combined to effect a still more transparent elucidation of the enigma of the case.

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There have been those,—the advocates of the horrid system of slavery upon which the telling of this story is based,—who have claimed that the absolute ownership, control, property, and power over the weak by the strong, the subserviency of the enslaved to the will of the rich and free, that those enthralled descendants of the African race who in those days ministered, though in bondage, to the wealth of the Southern American States, enjoyed greater benefits in the care of a humane ownership than if they were free; it has been claimed—if we may use a parallel simile,—in effect, that because the horse, or the cow, or the ass, was dependent on man for his daily needs, and troubled not his head for the bread of the morrow, the condition of the horse, or the cow, or the ass, was more desirable than that of man.

But this is a line of argument, an analogy however far absurd it may be or the reverse, which, coming within the province of the econo-

mist or statesman rather than the fictionist or story-teller, we will not trouble to pursue.

It is a generation now since the die was cast, and the fatal veto given, and a dastardly system of human barter and thralldom for ever overthrown.

Whether in civilization or barbarism, slavery has now been recognised as a stupendous blot, and through the round world its practices have been voted a disgrace to civilization, its bulwarks assailed and its strongholds overthrown.

As we hinted in the early explanatory pages of this story, the explosion of this system which has so long since been weighed in the balances of true intelligence rectitude and justice, and found wanting in every element of virtue righteousness and good ; was as the blasting of a mine, the uncomely fabric was overthrown, and its ruins, its *débris*, its component parts, were by the force of the terrific disaster—if disaster we may call it—a disaster wrought, albeit that it

might produce good—hurled to the farthest corners of the earth and scattered as to the winds of heaven.

Among the items of human wreckage which had been uprooted from the alien soil in which it had been implanted, was a deeply coloured family, which, subsequent to the emancipation decree, had located and employed themselves—or rather when they could find an employer had been employed—about the docks and shipping interest in the City of Baltimore, Maryland.

This family of coloured people consisted of a father and mother and some four or five younger branches, and rather unusual to tell, they formed practically an unbroken family circle, that is a family circle unbroken undivided by the slave trader's ruthless hand, for the now aging couple had, during their days of bondage been spared that poignant soul-embittering anguish which many and many a slave parent had suffered, of seeing their offspring ruthlessly

torn from their bosom, rent for ever asunder or sold by auction for gold before their very eyes.

But the coloured family to which we allude had, previous to the death of their master and owner at the battle of Five Forks and previous to emancipation, been the property of Hubert Gonault, who as we have said was one of those planters—for there were planters and planters in those days, slave owners and slave owners, for while some were not unkind, others were mere devils incarnate in the treatment of their slaves—who was a humane and considerate master.

This family consisted of the father and mother, Jeph and Martha, and four or five brothers and sisters of the Jules Massey who has occupied a not despicable position throughout the course of this tale.

After all, blighting and deleterious as is the influence of the curse of slavery upon any country or community in which it takes root, there

might have been some grains of truth in the assertion of its advocates, that the slave was better off under the protection of a master than dependent on his own resources and free, for certainly, so hard is the battle to be fought to win the good things of this life, that it may require a training to fit him for the fray; and a race which has spent its generations in downtrodden subserviency and ignorance must emerge from such a school, it must be admitted, but indifferently acquitted to maintain its own in the golden strife.

Moreover on the American continent, and perhaps throughout the world, there exists a prejudice in the minds of those whose skins are white inimical to those whose skins are black; for the pale faced races have ever been the dominant factors in the work of civilization, and must we not add the work, too often also, of demoralization throughout the generations and histories of men.

And as Jules Massey was in a highly prosperous vein, as if he had struck ore, and as all the other members of his house were dependent on their own resources, and their own resources seemed a poor resource upon which to be dependent, their existence was one, which Jules in the tenderness of his heart and yearning affection towards his parents, too well knew.

In plain terms while Jules Massey was prosperous and independent, even for him in affluence, his parents and brethren and those of his father's house were the reverse. And as Jules Massey's heart as well as his pocket bled copiously and continuously for the inpecuniosity of those of his kith and kin, it occurred to Jules that it would be no greater extravagance on his part to do the large share which he did towards the maintenance of those of his family in London than it would in the city of Baltimore, where their own untrained incapacity combined with that prejudice which we have said (more especially at the

date of our story) was in some quarters very strong against the black skinned race, they earned, to use a homely phrase, scarcely enough to keep together their bodies and their souls.

It was under such circumstances as these therefore, that, being left to the pursuit of his own unembarrassed desires, Jules Massey, soon after the events surrounding his late master's murder and all the evils which followed in its train, when the terrible storm had gone by and left him an untrammelled agent and free, and perhaps to interrupt the monotony of his now idle life, resolved that his father and mother should at his expense visit British shores. And so, leaving the younger scions to shift for themselves in the city of Baltimore as best they might, to England Martha Massey for the second time and old Jeph for the first time came.

If he had sprung from the same level and the same stock, the contrast between the highly

civilized Jules, now fairly imbued with European ways of thought, and his kith and kin was as a great gulph fixed.

But if Jules was thus highly civilized as we have seen, and,—in his own estimation at least,—a very genteel person indeed, perhaps almost as important in his own eyes as his late master had been in his, in the heyday of all his luxuriance and wealth, yet beneath his black skin there was the true grit, and Jules' heart had never gone very far awry. If Jules was vain and conceited to the backbone, his heart had ever kept fair and square and true; magnified as he had become, there was not a spark, not a scintilla in him, of that most despicable of all the despicable shapes of human pride and folly which makes a man forget, or that most noble and exalted form of humility and manliness, which makes a man remember, however humble they may be, the kith and kin from whose level he has arisen to his higher estate.

Old Jeph Massey, woolly-headed, horny-handed, grizzly-bearded, stalwart old nigger that he was, of true African descent, a genuine specimen of the Southern plantation freed slave, whom his late owner Hubert Gonault might at any moment of his life have sold as a horse or a dog. Martha Massey, a freed slave woman, such as many owners in the old slave-owning days, now happily gone, had kept just as they would have kept a cow, for what she was worth, and sold her children from her bosom just as it suited their convenience for the profit they would make, or used her in other ways too iniquitous even to name, such were the enormities of slave life; such parents as these Jules Massey, because they were his parents, would have acknowledged in the presence of a king, for if Jules had vanity and conceit he had very little of that most despicable pride.

But as we have often said before, the slave

property of the late Bertram Gonault's late father Hubert Gonault, had never while in his possession been reduced to such utter depths of degradation as these.

In the English seeing eyes of the old dead planter slaves were human beings.

And then came the voyage.

To old Jeph Massey, as he crossed the great ocean, the wonders of the deep were marvellous wonders indeed, and as day after day the prow of the great steamer clave the illimitable sea his astonishment seemed never to abate.

Then as he stood in the midst of London, in the great seas and tides of human activity and life which never ceased the monotony of their constant ebb and flow, he marvelled almost still more.

But in the eyes of Jeph, the splendid jewelled and gilded personality of his own son Jules, his fashionably cut cloth, his tall silk hat of spotless sheen, his upright form, his haughty air, this in

the eyes of the old negro slave Jeph was the greatest marvel of all.

That his own son Jules should come to be such a fine gentleman was almost what he could not believe.

We need not pursue the daily life of the trio in London, it were indeed needless almost to introduce the episode of their visit into these pages had it not been the means of casting an enlightening radiance across the track,—so obscured in mystery,—of this tale.

Had Jules Massey mailed to his parents all the press accounts which appeared, of the terrible event of Bertram Gonault's death, and the dark cloud through which he himself was passing, the illiteracy of old Jeph and Martha would have precluded them from availing themselves of the information, for compulsory ignorance not compulsory education was the rule of bondage in the old slave days. If Jules had had to die a felon's death by the hangman's hand it

would have been better far that his parents should be spared the humiliation and pain, better far that all remembrance of his name be blotted out.

But now all the storm clouds around this terrific avalanche of woe had cleared, blown away, and for the first time Jules spoke of them, to old Jeph and Martha face to face.

As the black pair sat in their son's plainly furnished plainly garnished little London room, which they considered very very snug quarters indeed,—so they were no doubt after the log cabin on a Virginian plantation which had been old Jeph's idea and ideal of home.

As they sat there listening to all the saddening narrative, of the tale which we have unfolded, which you, dear reader, step by step have been told, of Bertram Gonault's flight—if flight we may call it—from his Virginian home at Millbank, of his successful suit to establish his claim to his ancient home, of his rise to wealth and

splendour, and then of his mysterious murder and untimely death, then of Jules' arrest and liberation, then of the strange rumours which came to Jules' ears (for you must know dear reader that Jules knew much less than we have told you of the movements of Colonel Vander Meulen and his little ferret man in New York) of Bertram having been seen alive in New York, the once slave parents looked at their son and listened to all he said in astonishment expressed rather than in words by widely open mouths and eyes, for it is often by such facial contortions that surprise is expressed more plainly than in words.

And thus Jules Massey told his parents the whole ghastly tale.

We need not reproduce here that which Jules Massey's parents, old Jeph and Martha, told their son that they too knew, for we prefer rather to tell it in the sequel than in the text. And when Jules Massey heard what his parents

could tell him, it was then Jules' turn to open his eyes and mouth widely with surprise.

And so in the sequel we will tell our tale.

It was within twenty-four hours of Jules' and his parents' interchange of narratives, that the door opened of Mr. Lumley's office near Lincoln's Inn Fields, and to the surprise and amusement of the array of Mr. Lumley's clerks three black faces appeared.

At this uncommon apparition of three black faces, where the usual topics of consideration were broad acres and broad cloth, a subdued titter arose, and some of the young gentlemen of Mr. Lumley's staff did not refrain from breaking forth into a broad grin, till one, more self-controlled than the rest, suppressed his risible desires into a certain external gravity of face, and requested of Jules Massey—for to Jules Massey and his parents did the three black faces belong—what his pleasure might be.

Jules replied that his pleasure was an interview with Mr. Lumley, and very soon in Mr. Lumley's presence the three dusky forms stood.

Jules had acquired some of the manner of good English society as well as some of its airs, so rather than at all obsequiously he shook the great conveyancer quite cordially, quite genially by the hand ; but when Jules introduced his immediate forbears, the salutation with which they expressed their pleasure or respect for Mr. Lumley was of a less civilized more ludicrous sort, and which brought an ill-suppressed smile even on to the lawyer's white face.

" Please Mis'r Lumley father an' mother had somethin' to tell you which I thought you might like to hear, which might throw a little more light on poor Mas'r's death," Jules began very sorrowfully.

" Yes," said the lawyer with an encouraging, not to say patronising, look at the black pair, and of which, each of them acknowledged

again the condescension with a salutation of an indescribable kind.

"Law ess Mis'r Lumby, my Jules he has jes a bin tellin' we, dis yah drefu' tale o' our pore young Massa Bertram's murder," broke in Martha Massey, too full of it and too full of womanhood to restrain the event in her overwelling heart.

"Then of course you knew your son's late master?" the lawyer asked, "but I think if I remember rightly you were an important witness in his suit, to recover some years ago, the Vernwood estate?"

"La sakes ess Mis'r Lumby dat I war," Martha continued. "Know'd our pore young massa, Massa Bertram? guess I did know'n. Why lawkes haint I a nuss'd in my arms dis yah many a time when ole Massa hims fader war at Millbank. Know'd 'n when he war a teeny weeny chile, an' I war jes a scrap of a gal like, and our ole Massa Gonault

comed and he bought de Millbank plantation, and took me ober wid de rest ob de hands an' de stock when I war a young un. Mammy telld me as how I war flung into de deal cos one ob de colts broke his leg and didn't count for nuffin when Massa Gonault bought de farm an' de stock off de ole Massa Lee."

The London lawyer looked quizzically at Martha Massey at this outburst as she stood before him in a gaudy shawl recounting to him this tale of a state of society which to his English-bred way of thinking was so foreign and strange, that dark human being thrown in to a deal to replace a broken-legged colt !

Yet Mr. Lumley was intensely interested in what she had to tell.

"So then you knew your old master Hubert Gonault when he first came to live on the Millbank plantation ?" he asked.

"Know'd 'n ? Why sart'n sure I know'd 'n,"

Martha replied. "Ole Massa Gonault him come, so twar said, fr' down south war he'd made a pile o' money in de silver mines, and comed to Millbank wid hims new wife, a real smart 'un, one o' yer tip toppers, a real beauty she war, but lor' the berry debil for all her beautiful looks."

"And you knew your late master's son from his birth?" Mr. Lumley asked.

"Lor ah! sure I know'd all tree on em, didn't I?"

"Three of what?" asked Mr. Lumley gazing earnestly into the black face all eyes and ears, and a strange expression spreading over his pallid countenance.

"Why know'd ole Massa Hubert Gonault's three chilern."

"You mean to say Hubert Gonault had three children—three sons?" asked Mr. Lumley in surprise.

"Why good Lor ah! sartin sure he had, tree,

all born'd de same time, one as like de todder two as tree peas out ob de same pod."

"Good God!" the great lawyer sprung to his feet, there was a look of blank surprise upon his livid face. "Triplets!" he gasped, but so great was his astonishment that he had hardly breath to utter the word. The very idea throwing a great light on so much that was mysterious seemed to take away his breath.

"Ess, triples," said the black woman, "dat's what dem's called."

"Then tell me what you know," Mr. Lumley asked excitedly.

"Wall Sar Misser Lumby you see 'twar dis yah way. Dis yah's jes what happen.

"Our ole Massa, de Massa Lee at de Millbank plantation, him get down ; dunno how, but him get down berry berry pore, but dat ar war afore my time like, warn it Jeph?" (Jeph nodded assent.) "Den de day come and ole Massa Lee him go dead broke an 'bliged sell

up de plantation, and sell all de hands, an de stock, an cotton crop on de plantation, ebbery ting.

“ Den Massa Gonault him come, come fr’ down South, Mexico or somewhere I’ve bin tell’d, him come wid him fine Spanish wife to Millbank ; de Massa Gonault him de berry bes’ Massa for de niggers on de plantation in all dem ar parts. Lor what a time we did hab ! What shines ! What capers what shindies wid dem ar darkies.

“ But Massa Gonault him hab quarls like de berry furies wid de fine Spanish wife till de upshot on it war Massa he turn de fine wife out ob de house, cos Massa him tink she too fond of de young bruder ob ole Massa Lee. But afore dat dese yah tree chilern come into de worl, tree all de same time, de same day, ah thar ! jes as much alike as tree peas out ob de same pod, an I nussed em all tree ; lor I nussed em all tree at once, couldn’t tell nider one from tudder two nor tudder from both, an all tree marked on de

right cheek, ebery one like de tudder two, warn't em Jeph ? ain't that true ? ”

“ Ah, nebber seed nuffin like it,” Jeph replied. “ Nebber did.”

The lawyer stared at the old negress during her remarkable narrative with the incredulous look of a man who could scarcely credit the evidence of his own ears.

“ Wal Sar,” continued Martha Massey, “ den Massa Gonault, him hab nodder shine wid Missis bout de chilern, cos dey both claims all de tree. So what dey do, dey draws lots for de chilern, den our Massa Gonault him get de one an de Missis get de tudder two ob dem ar chilern, de Lord knows which two, cos nobody cept de mudder couldn't tell nor a one from tudder two.”

A broad smile passed over Mr. Lumley's features at the strangest of strange histories. He would have disbelieved every word of it, would have treated it as a wild fabrication had

it not been brought to him by Jules Massey who sat near a silent listener to all that was being said, and in Jules' veracity and true-heartedness he had the fullest faith.

"Then did the wife of your Master leave the home at Millbank?" Mr. Lumley asked.

"Lor ess. Massa Gonault him go off on hosback one day an when he come back de Missis war gone wid her two chilern and I nebber seed her arter dat, I nebber set eyes on her agin."

"And do you know where she went?"

"No, nebber heeard sart'n, but guess she went down south an we nebber seed nether she nor de two chilern agin, none ob de hands didn't."

"And what became of the other child?" the lawyer asked.

"Mas'r Bertram dat ar war," replied Martha, "him stop at Millbank, I nuss'd 'n an know'd all de time ob his growin up like, right up to de time when de war come. Den our ole Massa

and young Mas'r Bertram, dey boof go off to de war, an our ole Massa him get killed. Den all de niggers on de plantation riz up agin de ober-seer, an ebery nigger went jes when an war he liked best. Lor Missr Lumby nebber war sitch times like dem ar, nebber war, nebber war."

"And did you see Mr. Bertram after that?" asked Mr. Lumley.

"No, 'cept dat war jes one day; him come back to Millbank regler broke down like, cos ole Massa hims fader dead, and de ole home broke up, and all de niggers gone de Lord knows where. Den him—young Mas'r Bertram dat ar war—him come to our cabin cos I an Jeph an de young uns we stop dere, pore young Mas'r Bertram him regler broke hearted like, so de nex da Mas'r Bertram ax'd Jules and dey two went off togedder, Lord knows where dey went, but I only bless de Lord dat my Jules he ain't kilt, and sitch a fine gen'leman too." And as Martha Massey said so she cast an admiring

eye on the dark well-dressed son near her, a look of maternal pride.

The rest of the tale needs no telling, for the place where Martha Massey left off in her narrative was just about the epoch, where many years ago, the London conveyancer's connection with Bertram Gonault and the Vernwood romance began.

But Martha Massey's story threw, for Mr. Lumley, a great light into the deeper profounder recesses of what there was once so mysterious and inexplicable in the circumstances of Bertram Gonault's birth, and history, and life, and death. The mists of doubt and uncertainty had blown aside and left, in the eye of his mind, a dissolution of the enigma which for years had been puzzling and perplexing him, a view as clear as when in the physical world a traveller gains an Alpine summit and sees from its altitude, as far as his eye can reach, an uninterrupted view of the lower world.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER BROUGHT TOGETHER.

BUT Mervil Garnier was not dead. With that reckless daring and contempt for danger which marked the few acts in which he has come under our notice ; like as he survived the seething cauldron of leaping roaring flame in which that clever *World's* reporter told its readers that he was burnt to a cinder in Long Island City, so likewise he survived the perilous leap which he had taken to save his life by trusting it to the scant mercy of the boiling tide.

Verily the man seemed to live a charmed existence.

Or perhaps like that feline quadruped which purrs so complacently on the domestic hearth,

Mervil Garnier may be credited with a singular plurality of lives.

In the early dawn of the November morning, following the night upon which the woman Kathleen Venner had warned him of his near approaching danger, and of the coming of Paul Neugass with his two officers of the New York Police, in the early dawn of that November morning the coasting schooner *Chesapeake Belle* bound for New York from the South with a cargo of fruit, when near the mouth of the East River, off Governor's Island, ran nearly foul of an inanimate mass which was upon a log drifting out with the tide.

By the master's orders the *Chesapeake Belle* hove to, a boat was lowered, and the apparently drowned body of a human being was lifted on board, and lay on the deck of the schooner livid, motionless and to all appearances dead.

Having however no taste for such cargo on

board his vessel as a missing corpse, the Captain of the *Chesapeake Belle* directed that the body should be taken ashore.

But whither?

There was only one receptacle for such flotsam as dead men's bodies picked up off the surface of the sea, and that was the "Morgue," so in less than twelve hours from his desperate leap for liberty and life, Mervil Garnier was brought back to the very spot from which he had cast himself so recklessly and daringly on to the scant clemency of the merciless tide.

The body was deposited in a chamber of the lugubrious office. Then incessantly, hour after hour for many hours, those restorative measures were persevered in, which those attached to the institution knew well, only by too frequent experience, how to employ till finally perseverance was crowned with success, and the once apparently dead man Mervil Garnier again opened his eyes.

The blood again, though at first sluggishly, coursed through his veins, little by little warmth animation and mental consciousness returned.

Having recovered thus far Garnier was removed from the Morgue to within the precincts of the Belle Vue Hospital, where he was of course soon recognised and known, and before many hours had elapsed the devotion of Kathleen Venner again brought her to her lover's bedside, for she in her love was as vigilant as was the little ferret man Paul Neugass in his pursuit of his quarry to the death.

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The written story and confession of the Vernwood crime by the convict Michael Jervois, which as well as to the knowledge of Colonel Vander Meulen had likewise come into Mr. Lumley's hands. This written account, coupled with the remarkable tale related to him by Martha and old Jeph Massey had the effect

of widely opening Mr. Lumley's eyes, of widely extending his knowledge of the once obscure history of Bertram Gonault's unusual birth,—a manner of birth as uncommon as had been his manner of life and manner of death—and of the tragedy of his untimely fate.

He saw now that there had been an influence or influences at work beneath the surface of the dark tide of crime which had rolled so sinistrously along, of which before he had no cognisance, had never dreamed.

A rough popular adage has it that there is a woman at the bottom of everything, and, deleterious as alas the influence of woman has too often been in this world for ill, it is certain that her presence in the world has likewise oftener been a stupendous influence for good. The mother's affectionate and kindly solicitude, the wife's guidance through the darkest as well as the brightest hours of life, or in weakest childhood the support of a sister's hand, all have

been influences for earthly good which oft and oft have guided men through the storms of earth to the haven of heaven.

With the lawyer's experience and acumen, and the sagacity of the man of the world, Mr. Lumley saw there was an influence at work of which till now he had never dreamed.

The marriage of the once wild wandering debt-laden exiled Hubert Gonault to the beautiful Spanish Mexican woman, her presentation to her husband of the three sons at one birth, their marvellous likeness each to each, then her subsequent separation from her husband with her two sons chosen by lot, the growth of Bert-ram to manhood were the first four scenes.

Then Hubert Gonault's rise to affluence as a Virginian planter, his service under General Lee in the Confederate Army and subsequent death at the battle of Five Forks, and ruin of his estate at Millbank by the American War and the freedom of his slaves closed the first part.

The subsequent recovery, by the son, of the old English ancestral home, the jealousy of the hot-blooded discarded Spanish Mexican wife, and the affiliation of the Mexican murder society calling themselves "The Sons of Cain." The perpetration by the emissary of the brotherhood, of the ghastly crime which we have described, alas but too successfully achieved by Michael Sullivan *alias* Michael Jervois.

And here the curtain falls.

All this, when the lawyer pieced together incident by incident, piece by piece as a child places piece by piece of some puzzle or picture map, combining all into one comprehensive picture, into one harmonious whole, formed a puzzle which he quite admitted to himself that, but for the 'cuteness of the American detective, he could never have solved.

But when all the once mysterious acts of the drama arose clearly in the London lawyer's mind, it seemed to him as if he gazed on a

picture drawn by some weird imagination guiding an artistic hand, or like the page of some romance.

But even now Mr. Lumley felt the drama was not complete, he felt that one act remained unplayed, it was an act in which he felt that it was his to play the leading part.

The murderer Michael Jervois in the written confession which we have reproduced admitted that he was guilty of the crime of Bertram Gonault's murder, but in qualifying his guilt and protesting his innocence, the murderer confessed and declared as before his God that he owed his late master no ill-will; he wrote that in the perpetration of the crime which he had committed and for which he was about to die he was but the tool, the mere cat's-paw in other hands.

And in the truth of this part of the written confession Mr. Lumley now fully believed. He therefore saw it his duty again to act; re-

solved upon another *coup*, and again he called in the shrewdness which he had by this time come fully to recognise, of Colonel Vander Meulen to his aid.

* * * * *

We will again raise the curtain and shift the scene. Twice to his intense disgust had the little ferret man Paul Neugass lost the scent of his game, twice had he been outwitted and befooled, twice had his quarry eluded his grasp.

But Paul Neugass uttered an irreligious oath, that rather than again be frustrated he would follow Mervil Garnier into the East River or to anywhere beyond where the water wasn't cold.

And Paul Neugass meant to keep his iniquitous vow.

* * * * *

During these days Colonel Vander Meulen, as an actor, under the assumed and stage name of Wedmore Somers, never for a day lost sight of Lawrence Haughton his familiar chum.

If the lasso had to be thrown upon the wind, or the net to be cast upon the waters, he resolved that the throw should be accomplished with an unerring and a masterly hand.

And a past master in his art we have ever said Colonel Vander Meulen was.

And so the snare was sprung.

On the same day, and to prevent all collusion ; and allowing for the difference between New York and London time, perhaps almost in the same hour, the two men, of whom we have spoken throughout these pages as Lawrence Haughton and Mervil Garnier, were arrested, the former in London, the latter in New York, and charged with being, in the matter of the crime of the murder of the master of Vernwood, accessories before and after the fact.

Under an extradition warrant Mervil Garnier was brought to England to be tried together with his brother Lawrence Haughton, in an English Court, for his crime.

It is now no longer necessary for the purposes of our story, that we should maintain around these two men the veil of *incognito* and the obscurity which we have cast about their identity and their names.

To prevent all possibility of communication or collusion the men were imprisoned, previous to their appearance in Court, in different parts of the country in different gaols.

At length the day appointed for the hearing of the case arrived.

The great London conveyancer Mr. Lumley occupied a seat at the solicitors' table of the Court. The magistrates took their seats on the bench, the preliminary business of the Court was gone through, none of which we need detail.

And then at last the two men whose crimes no longer hoodwinked, deceived, or misled the keen clear sighted scrutiny of the law, and whose tricks the sagacity of Colonel Vander

Meulen—aided let us not forget by his persevering little ferret man—had overcome, stood side by side in the dock of an English Court.

All eyes were directed to them as in charge of constables they appeared.

The curiosity of the community had been aroused as we have often ere now said in the case, and they stood before a packed and crowded Court.

But here again was a new surprise.

As the two prisoners entered the dock Mr. Lumley raised his eyes.

My reader, have you ever been addicted to that treacherous weakness of humanity, that insidious device of the wicked one to effect the overthrow of your reason, by tempting you to imbibe just so much of the cup which inebriates, just so much that your eyes play your reason false, and seem to multiply every person or everything you look upon by two ?

If you have you have some idea of how Mr.

Lumley felt when he first beheld the prisoners at the bar.

He asked himself whether or not, by some blundering, the prisoners had been brought up separately, or whether, ere coming into Court that morning he had not partaken of just one glass too many of that fine dry Cliquot which muddled his head while it rejoiced his heart, and caused both his eyes to see at once what they ought by natural optical law to behold at twice, for there before his eyes stood the twin brothers, who, however they had shrouded themselves in mystery, and sought to conceal their identity under the misleading veil of fictitious names; by the scant flattery and unvarnished truth of blind eyed justice stood before the world and before that tribunal, instead of Mervil Garnier and Lawrence Haughton, brothers—two out of the triplets—sons of the same parents born in the same hour on the same day as the remaining member of that strange trio, the murdered Bertram Gonault.

The wondrous similarity of the two brothers, as they stood in the dock each to each, and of both to the late Bertram Gonault, filled with amazement the minds of all—there were the same tall forms, the same intellectual faces, the same stature, and the right cheek of each brother by a birth-mark which had affected or disfigured all three alike, was similarly scarred ; similarly curled moustaches, and frequently there played on the face of each the same mocking, sardonic, Mephistophelian smile.

Moreover they were similarly dressed, and when the four long white hands rested on the front of the docks, the ring digit of each left hand was adorned by a similar sapphire ring, fac-similes of the genuine heirloom with which they had been provided by their discarded Spanish Mexican mother who had been the chief plotter in the crime.

To all who beheld it the likeness appeared as whimsical—if we can apply such a term to

men in such a place—as it was miraculous, astonishing and strange.

To Colonel Vander Meulen who sat in Court all the puzzling occurrences in connection with the perplexing case were explained.

The scales of doubt and embarrassment completely fell from his marvelling eyes.

To Mr. Lumley and those in Court who had been intimate with Bertram Gonault in life, the perfect likeness of the three brothers each to the other was all the more startling and strange.

It was one of those freaks which nature, perhaps in her hours of idleness or dalliance plays with creation and on man.

But out of the labyrinth of puzzledom, into which nature in this strange freak of her erratic fancy had caused those men whom we have employed in the elaboration of this story to be involved, we will pass on to the consummation of our tale.

The magisterial inquiry into the guilt of the

two men Lawrence and Mervyn Gonault for being accessories to the murder of their brother Bertram passed off.

Space does not allow us, and it is unnecessary to follow the details of the evidence adduced.

With regard to them Justice was not swift, her feet seemed hampered, and fettered, and the clean hands of the blinded goddess for once seemed tied.

Then there was a remand, for evidence sufficiently strong to convict seemed very difficult to find, for if Justice is clear-eyed her movements are deliberate and slow.

There was, as we know, the written confession of Michael Jervois the real murderer, but that document was hidden away in the pigeon holes of dogged officialism and straight-laced red tape, besides, being a posthumous document it was of no sufficient value as evidence to convict, in the eye of the law, of so serious a crime.

Then there was another formal magisterial

examination of the prisoners and another and another formal remand.

* * * * *

Then a serious matter arose before Mr. Lumley's prosecution, a serious stumbling-block was thrown in his path.

The late possessor being dead, and the title deeds of beautiful Vernwood going a-begging for an owner, the two surviving brothers Gonault, through a clever conveyancing lawyer, as clever perhaps and a little more so and a deal less scrupulous and respectable than the great conveyancer Mr. Lumley himself, claimed the estate.

The quirks and quibbles of British law are apt to turn queerly round, and the *pros* and *cons* of a case may resolve themselves into curious conclusions and incongruous wholes.

And thus it became now a question whether the two men in custody would be the winners of a wealthy estate or the losers themselves,

of life, liberty, and all that the world holds dear.

Then into that which took place at a private interview in Mr. Lumley's office we will not too severely thrust the probe of our inquiring pen.

Lawyers may have, and often have, strange reasons for doing strange things, and secrets enacted within the closed doors of lawyers' offices, like the utterances of the confessional, may be too sacred to know the light.

Perhaps Justice was cheated and deluded of her true own, but what is known is that the prosecution of the two brothers Lawrence and Mervyn Gonault was abandoned and they stood upon English soil as free men.

Whatever compromise was arrived at, however Mr. Lumley peddled with, or lent himself to play into the hands of crime we shall never probably be told.

Perhaps Mr. Lumley had an eye to those

future golden days when he should be released from the trammels and martyrdom of the law ; and perhaps the distant vision arose before his eyes of beautiful Vernwood in some longed-for future as his own beautiful home.

But this is mere surmise ; we know not. We have said lawyers have strange reasons for doing strange things.

If that was Mr. Lumley's dream, it was—as we must show—a dream to be dashed, to fade and vanish as the dreamer awoke.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. XAVIER'S.

BUT my dear reader there is a chapter of this story which remains untold.

Perhaps you will reproach me, perhaps you will ask wherefore has the chapter been left till now, why has an episode been allowed to drop as it were out of this tale? It may be a chapter, like a day of sorrow, but having in it rays of genial gladness, and its sunset of brightness and joy. Verily this whole book may be one over-clouded tragedy of sadness, nay had not this chapter had to be written perhaps this whole sanguinary drama would never have been acted or its history have to be told.

Destiny is merely a fiction and a name; we

cannot mould the world to our poor wills and little aims, for oft as man may be made the instrument in higher hands to higher ends, the "making of history" is the function of vaster omniscience, a more universal omnipresence than we, in our most splendid dreams, or the most magnificent flights of our circumscribed imaginations can conceive. For when man postures on the world's stage, too oft he forgets how infinitesimal a thing he is, the greatest of his kind but as the grass which springs up into life to flourish only for a span, or as a leaf which must be green for a season and then fall inevitably to the ground, an atom among the countless atoms of his race.

Even the great round world on which we live out our short lives is but one among a universe of countless worlds.

The wiser we become the more completely do we realize our own insignificance in relation to infinite time and space.

But leaving such reflections as these we will return to our tale.

It was a peaceful placid Sabbath morn.

Over the wide expanse of the land-locked southern Irish bay, known as Cork or Queens-town Harbour, and upon the gentle slopes of its hills and valleys and loughs, as they came undulating to the shore, a bright and genial sun shone softly down upon the Emerald Isle and upon its land-locked waters, making it appear for the nonce a matter of difficulty to comprehend wherefore the waters too around "the Emerald Isle" might not with equal right claim to the title of the "Emerald Sea," for on this particular Sabbath morn the translucence of the ocean seemed to reflect the hues of earth, and all creation to be pervaded by a restful, calm repose.

Here and there, dotted over, and within the shelter of the broad and noble harbour, a few craft—mostly grain-laden merchant vessels—lay at anchor and like land and sea they lay at rest.

On the quays and wharves at the mouth of the River Lee—which with the many villas on its picturesquely rising banks, connects Queens-town with the city of Cork,—and round the Catholic places of worship, there loitered, all more or less decked out in holiday attire, a population of idlers of both sexes and many ages, who with that ceaseless flow of prattle and apt repartee for which the Irish are so justly famed, wiled away the peaceful idle Sabbath morning hours.

But among the smaller fry of the maritime world which rested at anchor in the bay, out towards its centre there seemed lazily to swing on her cable one of those Ocean liners, a veritable leviathan compared with the smaller craft, and which the experienced eye readily perceived to be an ocean going steamer waiting there for the arrival of mails—outward bound.

The *Prussian Monarch*, for such was her name, had scarcely been made fast to her

moorings ere there came alongside of her sundry small official and non-official craft—and several persons came on board.

Among these were several females of the working class, whose glib and ready tongues and characteristic head attire, indicated unmistakably that their origin was of the Emerald Isle, and while they offered various pretty and petty oddments of merchandise, such as fruit, drinks, bog-oak ornaments, blackthorns, laces, and relics to the passengers of the outward-bound vessel, kept up,—especially with the more youthful of the male passengers,—a constant fire of keen witty repartee in which the Irish tongue invariably triumphed and the latter invariably came only second best off, for it is about useless for any other nationality to enter the lists or attempt to vie in repartee with the bright and ever ready intelligence of a bright witted Irish girl.

But whilst on the great ship passengers and

visitors were thus in barter or gossip or fun whiling away the idle waiting hours, alongside the Queenstown quay an official steam tender, the smoke lazily curling from her short thick funnel into the cloudless atmospheric blue, lay waiting the arrival of the train from Dublin bringing the latest outward New York and American mails, and some passengers for whom business or pleasure made it desirable to go on board the *Prussian Monarch* at the latest possible moment ere she cut off communication with land.

However at last the train from Dublin arrived and the calm peacefulness of the day was broken in upon by the transfer from train to tender and steamer of passengers and baggage and mails.

Among the several persons who might be seen hurrying from the train to the boat were two individuals whose clerical garb, shaven pates, and other distinctive marks of their order,

marked them as priests of the Church of Rome.

Although very similarly attired and so far alike, there was a strong contrast in the physical character and appearance of the two men. The one, evidently the younger, although appearing almost boyish at first sight, perhaps on closer investigation you would have found to be some six or seven and twenty years.

It might have been that the austerity of the regimen to which he had been subjected from an early age, the rigid abstinence, the continuous fasts, the asceticism, the subdual of fleshly lusts, the complete mastery of the spiritual over the carnal being,—it might have been that his religious zeal had stunted and subdued that which other men acquire in a fulness of physical growth. He was clean shaven, lean-jawed, and although his features were sunken and livid by abstinence from the actual necessities which nature demands, yet there was a clear, healthful

honest, brightness in his large truthful grey eye, which to a shrewd judge of human nature would have spoken volumes for the transparent honesty of his life, and confidence in his belief. Without being contaminated by any of the Jesuitical subtleties of the church of his adoption, his soul had caught the fire of its holy zeal.

Such zeal as this it is, which engenders holy priestly lives.

The travelling companion however of this youthful and guileless priest was a man of quite different mould, and although the tonsure was visible upon his crown, and he had a closely shaven face, and an ivory crucifix dangled from his girdle, and he wore the same sombre habit of his order, and the same monkish hood and cowl, yet his portly person told far less of abstinence, far less of penances and fasts, and a much more intimate acquaintance with refectory and cook. With such laxity indeed had he ob-

served his fasts that he was even a little inclined to *embonpoint*.

His age, though not easy to determine, might have exceeded the apparent five or six and twenty summers of his junior companion by a good two decades. His hair, or what of it remained since his now smooth and shaven pate had passed under the barber's hands,—was straight and dark, and whereas the boyish looking countenance of the younger priest was open honest and without guile, his was pale, rather sallow than livid, while his eye was dark, restless, ever observant of all that passed on every side, and keen ; and it would have taken but a superficial degree of penetration to determine that rather than in asceticism, or in monkish or monastic seclusion, he had been schooled and taught in the rough and ready ways of a wicked world.

Along with others from the steam-tender conveying the passengers and mails, the two

priests who registered respectively, the elder of the twain as Father St. Vincent de St. Croix, and the younger as Father Lyola, stepped up the gangway on to the deck of the noble liner the *Prussian Monarch*, and then soon anchor was weighed, and slewing round to the south, the fine vessel steamed out of Queenstown Harbour, and turned her head away towards the Western Ocean.

Gradually but rapidly the southern rocky headlands and promontories disappeared one by one from view, the bright green slopes of the Emerald Isle faded away in the ocean haze, the Fastnett Rock with its lighthouse as seen from the deck of the *Prussian Monarch* sunk every minute lower and lower beneath the horizon of the Eastern waves, and onward onward the great ship ploughed the sea day after day.

We need not enlarge upon the incidents of the voyage. During its continuance the two

priests maintained a certain exclusiveness apart from those by whom they were surrounded, a separation which was perhaps consistent with their holy office and their creed.

In less than nine days, from the port bow of the *Prussian Monarch* was visible, rising from the bosom of the broad Atlantic, the long, low, brown, shelving tongue of sand known as Sandy Hook, and the next morning, after certain formalities, in place of the monotonous outlook which day after day they had looked upon, of the boundless ocean and the ever rolling ever swelling deep, the *Prussian Monarch* had reached her moorings, and on every side on sea and land was seen the busy life of the city of New York.

There were the usual delays, and the inspection of baggage, and then the passengers of the great vessel, liberated from the luxuriously appointed water-bound prison which she had been to them for the past nine days, went each one on his own way of life.

The two priests mingled with the busy and dirty throng which crowd the wharves and quays down to the water's edge of West Street New York.

But Father St. Vincent de St. Croix had not been ten minutes in the busy crowd ere, rather to the astonishment of his young companion, he was accosted by a strange, insignificant looking individual of diminutive stature, whose status and condition was a sheer utter enigma to the boyish looking younger priest, but who, as the diminutive individual is already well known to the reader, we will say was no other than the little ferret man Paul Neugass.

However after some minutes converse Father St. Vincent de St. Croix and Paul Neugass parted, and without further noticing this incident we will accompany the two priests on their way.

* * * * *

From its sources among the Adirondack

mountains near the Canadian frontier, through Lake George and Lake Champlain, for some three hundred miles in a nearly southerly direction, the broad and stately current of the Hudson River flows along by the Eastern Counties of the State of New York.

Although lacking in the castellated ruins and fantastic legends of the past, commemorative of the old freebooting times of the middle ages of European story, which lend the peculiar fascination of their romance to the Rhine, the Hudson, in the charm of its riparian scenery, the weird spell which seems to rest upon the solitary silent reaches of its waters, its varying succession of broad expanse and strait defile, in grandeur perhaps the Hudson even outvies the Rhine.

And thus this Queen among rivers flows placidly onward past wooded banks and fertile lands, till between the villages or townships of Weehawken and Hoboken, and the more

populous centres of Jersey City on the one hand, and the busy world of Manhattan Island and New York on the other, it debouches and becomes lost in the greater volume of water of the Atlantic Ocean and the Bay of New York.

For hundreds of miles above New York City the Hudson River is a broad, navigable, stately, stream on whose majestic bosom there ply daily among others steamers to the Cities of Albany and Troy.

The river boats that ply in American waters are commonly white painted, differing in aspect, construction, and shape from similarly employed craft in European rivers and bays.

It was on to one of these boats known as the *Princess*, as she lay berthed off West Street New York that the two priests Father Lyola and Father St. Vincent de St. Croix betook themselves very soon after landing from the *Prussian Monarch* in which they had crossed from the Emerald Isle.

Punctual to her time the *Princess* backed out into the stream, turned her head to the current of the Hudson, and began her journey up the river whose aspect we have just shortly described.

As the day wore on there were several stoppages at water-side landing stages and wharves to take in or put off passengers, produce, or goods.

The two priests maintained the same exclusiveness of demeanour towards those around them which they had evinced ever since they stepped from the shores of the British Isles.

At last however their long water journey seemed to have come to an end. The steamer *Princess* drew up at a little wooden landing stage or wharf on the left bank of the river, the two churchmen stepped ashore, and the white boat, loosed once more from the landing stage, again steamed away on her northward voyage.

After making certain arrangements as to their scant baggage and simple belongings for with apostolic simplicity they had almost taken neither purse nor scrip, the two priests left the landing stage. They made an inquiry as to the direction, and then quitting the water's edge, pursued on foot between groves of tall chestnut trees a devious path up a dusty road, till at a distance of something less than half a mile from the river bank, within secluded grounds which in the heat of summer would be shaded by the tall and stately trees which stood around, giving to the place the aspect of sacred seclusion, they came to a large building which, beautiful without, commanding fine extensive views of the surrounding country, was a conventual retreat.

As this building is in part a seminary devoted to the education of young ladies, besides being also a convent, and may be known to some who peruse these pages, further than to call it by

the name of the Convent of St. Xavier we will refrain from publishing its name.

The two priests, Father Lyola and Father de St. Croix approach the entrance by a winding drive through the beautiful and tastefully laid out grounds of the Convent ; without hesitation they rang the bell which was immediately answered by a Sister of Charity or Nun.

The face of the latter was almost wholly concealed by a linen coif of spotless white drawn tightly across the forehead surrounding and concealing from view the lower parts of the face. For the rest, she was attired in the black woollen habit and veil of her order as a nun.

Although the coif which she wore did not completely conceal from view her youth and her traces of female attractiveness and beauty, neither could it hide her sad, nay dejected, mien, and what perhaps were traces of regret at having abjured, shut out from her existence all the brightness and beauty of the world around,

with all its ecstasies and joys, which surely God could have had no purpose in creating if He did not create them very bright and beautiful that men and women might enjoy.

As she answered the summons, with a slight obeisance to their holy office, the nun, on observing the two Fathers of the Church, swung wide open the Convent doors and the two priestly travellers entered a spacious and lofty hall—in fact the entrance hall of the Convent.

On all sides were abundant evidences of outlay on needful or unneedful modern improvements, to please the eye and for the gratification of luxury and taste. There were marble statuary, rich and curious vases; the walls were hung with costly paintings of religious subjects and portraits of saints, while the air was redolent with the sweet and balmy fragrance of the choicest flowers.

Such was the gilded portal to the whited

sepulchre which led to the tomb of buried hopes and lives, the fasts and penances, the living deaths of too much and too many of those who had been deluded by their religious vows into passing beyond.

The two priests Father Lyola and his elder and more portly companion were invited, by the pensive looking Sister of Charity who admitted them, through the entrance hall, into one of four large parlours or reception rooms provided as receiving or waiting rooms for those who came on business or otherwise to this, call it as you will, "whited sepulchre" or "abode of love."

The reception room which the two new arrivals entered, was like the entrance hall, a lofty and spacious apartment, beautified by all that was costly, adorned in profusion with all things beautiful that wealth could purchase, or luxury ease refinement and cultured taste could suggest or demand.

Here the two priests were left by the pensive Sister who retired to inform the Mother Superior of the arrival of two Fathers of the Church.

They had not long to wait ere the Mother Superior of the Convent appeared,—a woman, as far as the coif and gown of her order permitted any judgment to be formed, of some thirty or forty years of age; and when the elder of the two priests, Father St. Vincent de St. Croix, presented to her a letter of introduction and recommendation from a well known Irish Roman Catholic Bishop, The Reverend Mother Celeste,—her conventual name,—was all blandness, suavity, and smiles in her exertions to impress favourably the minds—“after travelling so far”—of her newly arrived guests. The most anxious inquiries were made as to their voyage and their mission and their well being.

From the Convent parlour the two priests were conducted to the refectory where wine

and choice refreshments were served, they were then conducted through the various parts of the establishment, and as the Church pampers its Fathers, were treated as honoured guests.

But these more material and worldly matters we will pass.

The recital of this episode of our story tempts us now indeed to write with a pen of gold tipped with a priceless gem, to remove the very shoes from off our feet, to go gently, circumspectly, for the place whereon we tread is most delicate if most—shall we say it—unholy ground.

Father St. Vincent de St. Croix and Father Lyola had tarried something less than seven days in the Convent of St. Xavier when the former, the elder priest, became interested in a certain *religieuse* known in the Convent as Sister Agatha, a Sister who, rather than in works of charity or cloistered devotion, was occupied

in the instruction of the young ; although under the banner of the same faith, and under the influence of the same Church, the educational and conventual departments of the Convent of St. Xavier were in separate and distinct though adjacent buildings. But it is to be feared that the tender minds in training at the seminary attached to the Convent of St. Xavier's were shown only the warm, devotional, poetic colouring of conventual life rather than permitted to see too closely the darker incidents which occurred behind its veil, and we believe it a fact that few of those who even as Protestants entered its schools left without at least a strong bias towards the tenets of the Church of Rome.

But these are considerations which intertwine not with the network of our tale.

Even Convent walls, jealously guarded portals, vows of poverty and chastity, the ceremonies of High Mass, and all the phalanx of

saints and imagery by means of which the Church allures unwary souls within its fold, cannot exclude the influence of love.

Cupid is an intrusive divinity, and not the strongest have panoplied themselves impervious to his darts as he flits on golden wings around the tulip bells, and flirts and toys and trifles, till he strikes whole hearted youth ; so even stern penances, austere vows, and all the thunders and anathemas of the Church, with childhood's careless raillery he laughs to scorn.

And had Cupid then entered the sacred precincts of St. Xavier's, had the staid priest Father St. Vincent de St. Croix fallen a victim to his wily arts and spells ?

Ye who imagine that vows of chastity and abstinence, undertaken by they who assume the veil of the recluse or don the cassock and the stole of anointed priesthood, can arm them against his assaults, unburthen your minds of a delusion so intense.

But whether or not the staid and portly priest Father St. Vincent de St. Croix had been stricken by Cupid's dart the presence of Sister Agatha seemed to have for him the fascination of a charm.

Whether he was drawn by the saintly beauty, the holy calm of her face impelled by his own love-smitten heart, or influenced by some attraction more subtle or profane we will, without telling, leave it open for the reader to conclude.

At the Convent of St. Xavier horticulture was carried to the perfection of a fine art. There were groves and gardens where the Graces might have worshipped, or whose solitudes might, as high places, have been dedicated to spiritual communion with the Gods.

It was in one of these called the "Italian Garden," set apart mainly for the use of the Sisterhood of St. Xavier's, that Father St. Vincent de St. Croix encountered in sad and

contemplative mood the Nun Sister Agatha alone.

Her meditations might have been of holy things, or perhaps her thoughts flew back on the golden wings of memory to other years, when in some bright home, in a world which she had abjured, which now she vainly sought to forget, she might have been the idol of a parent's heart. Or perhaps there came back to her the incidents of some undying and yet unforgotten love.

But whatever the meditations of Sister Agatha might have been they were broken in upon and interrupted by a till now unseen presence near her of no other than the priest Father St. Vincent de St. Croix.

"Sister a dime for your thoughts," were the unclerical and somewhat profane words with which the priest addressed the nun.

"Oh Father," she replied, startled at his presence. "Ofttimes the heart is sick and very very sad, verily bowed down even to the

dust with sadness, with the consciousness of its own weary longings. Ah too, by its own unworthiness. Yes, by the anxieties for its future as well as by memories of the past."

The priest glanced curiously but keenly at the sad nun as she spoke. Perhaps he was too worldly, or perhaps he was not too well versed in that most needful of all knowledge to a priest whose functions are the alleviation of spiritual ills, the care of the inmost spiritual necessities of the human heart, perhaps he knew not the deepest pangs it oftentimes suffers, knew not the utterness of the solitude which may pervade its most hidden, most secret, most sacred depths.

But even Father St. Vincent seemed touched acutely—as what heart would not—as the nun gazed sadly into his face, her sadness and beauty seemingly intensified by the veil and coif, and sombre weeds of her order.

"But Sister," he resumed, "should there not

be joy in a heart, which, renouncing all earthly ties, has dedicated itself to the Lord? Is such a consecration a holocaust of sadness. Nay my Sister, rather than bondage term it a sacrifice of love, which should be only too joyfully offered to the Lord, the sweetest holocaust that our Holy Church has granted the privilege of woman to offer, to become its bride."

"Father," she replied, "are not you a consecrated priest, one of the Lord's anointed, pledged by your vows of sanctity, of celibacy, then what can you,—father pardon my boldness,—what can you know of the place which the word bride occupies in woman's heart. Tell me my father, if cloistered within these convent walls, were they as high as heaven is high and a thousand times the thickness that they are, think you father, that they would shut out from my heart the remembrance of my earliest truest purest love. Love! call it carnal if you will,

such love is what we give to man, but adoration worship, is the mede of and offered only to the King of Heaven."

"True daughter but your words tell me that there has been brightness in your past, that there have been worldly ties which you have not forgotten, from which you cannot sever, cannot disentangle your heart."

At that moment they gained a summer or arbour house among the trees which formed in summer a secluded and cool retreat, but now with the approach of winter the aspect of the scene was less attractive and changed. They entered and Father St. Vincent took a seat near the beautiful but sad-faced nun.

"Speak not I pray you father to me of a past, past! *the* past! The word conveys to me a meaning which would to my God I had never known, which I would were blotted out altogether from the pages of my memory as a thing that had never : never been."

"But Sister, is there no hope?" said the priest, as, taking her hand in his own, the tears arose in his eyes from,—man of the world as he was,—an overwelling heart.

For some moments both were silent, the priest still holding the nun by the hand, he seemed deeply saddened by her sadness, and now and again a sob broke the stillness around them.

"Then tell me dear Sister," he resumed, "could the happiness of past days be restored, could you live again the years that have flown, would you recant, would you live over again the life of,—of a recluse—tell me?"

"Oh father tempt me not" said the nun. "You know father that I have taken vows, tempt me not to recantation, to perfidy, to infidelity to my troth," and as she bent her head, hiding her face in her veil, the tears from her eyes fell fast hot, welling, blinding, burning tears.

As in some of those seabound countries and communities, where the land lies below the level of the surrounding ocean, a system of dams restrain the encroachments of the ever threatening tide, so the barriers of an unnatural life of austerity which hedged in the life of the *religieuse* broke down, and the overwhelming torrent of the memories of years rushed in to assert their natural place, to engulf, to overturn, to wash out, all the false doctrine and delusion inculcated by a heretic faith. In the depth of her spiritual anguish the agonized sister—call her girl, woman, child, matron, call her what you will—but all the attributes of true womanhood had been awakened. She fell upon her knees before the priest whom the tenets of her adopted faith had taught her to venerate and prostrate her reason as if before some demigod.

“Oh father father” she burst forth, “absolve me from iniquity. But refrain oh my father

from speaking of the past, of—of—of—,” she would have added more but she broke down in its midst and the tears seemed to flow from her eyes like rain.

The priest sat silently by, knowing the cup of her tears and affliction would be all the sooner voided by the copiousness of its flow, then as she became more composed he gently raised her from the kneeling posture, and seated her again beside him, where, although less afflicted, the great sobs now and again burst from her like the great intermittent rain drops which succeed a summer shower.

“Sister tell me this,” he then asked, “were it in my power to produce proof positive that your past is not altogether strange, is not altogether unknown to me, would you choose the life of a recluse, tell me, is it by your own free choice that you have renounced a world, a life which once smiled around you, around a beautiful home, around youth’s dearest hopes.”

The nun started visibly, violently, at his words.

“Father you know more than you choose to tell.”

“Nay Sister, say not more than I choose to tell, say rather—more than I have yet told. Look my sister, see here.” With these words he produced from the fob of the monkish gabardine which he wore, and handed to her for examination, what was naught else than that costly jewel which had passed through so many vicissitudes and adventures and into so many possessors’ hands, the ring, the gold and sapphire heirloom of the Gonaults.

For some minutes the nun, as if affected by a magic charm, gazed at the elaborately cut stone. Perhaps the flood gates of memory would have again burst but it seemed as if she had wept herself empty of tears.

“Sister I see that the jewel is not strange to you, tell me where you saw it last.”

She looked fixedly at the gem, her lips quivered violently but she stood silent and unmoved.

At last she spoke.

"Father," she replied, "I would keep silence were it not that my vows compel me to withhold not the truth from an anointed priest of God."

"Tell me, speak Sister, am I not too forbidden by my auricular oaths, by the seal of the confessional, to utter the secrets of lives which have been entrusted to me under its sacred ban."

"Yea father, no other argument would move me to the confession of where I last saw that ring."

"Speak out dear Sister, tell me where!"

"Father I last saw it on my husband's hand."

The priest winced visibly as she spoke and there spread over his face a look of surprise. Her

admission seemed to dispel all the priestly, what we will call all the professional manner and sentiment from him, and whereas, as previously he surrounded, cloaked himself in his sanctity rather than his manhood, now he threw off his priesthood and became man.

“Sister,” he resumed, “you mean to tell me that you were wedded to an earthly bridegroom ere you were wedded to the——”

“Father, my union with the Church of God as I know you were about to call it, was naught but a farce, a delusion, a sham,” the tone of her voice changing as she spoke from warmth to anger.

“Nay,” she continued, “I grow reckless when I think of the past, rather than being wedded to the Church say rather that I am a slave, kidnapped by the Jesuitical wiles of this accursed system which is called a religion, a faith, in whose false doctrines the deluded vainly trust for the salvation of their souls.”

The priest opened his eyes widely as she spoke, perhaps as much astonished at her bold condemnation of the system under which she lived as at her rising ire.

But if the inmost workings of his heart could have been laid bare we should have seen that his true sentiment was as much one of exultation as surprise. But Father de St. Croix did not fail to pursue and turn to his advantage the cue which thus he had thus cunningly obtained.

"You mean you speak truthfully when you tell me you saw that jewel," the priest asked, "on your husband's hand."

"Father I say it in the sight of Heaven before my God, in whose sight I became an earthly bride."

"Then tell me when, where, under what circumstances you were wed."

"Father, the story of my marriage is a sad story. I was the dotedly loved and sole child of an aged parent in a very very beautiful

English home ; all the surroundings of my life taught me only innocence, I was as guileless as free as the birds that sang, or the flowers that bloomed, and the love in my heart was like that of the birds or flowers, as the birds seek their consorts, as the flowers extend their tendrils, so it only needed the presence near me of a stronger manhood in which my heart might trust, to which I might yearn, and render up its love.

“ At last it came. Bertram Gonault came to our beautiful home. Father it would be a long story to tell why and wherefore he came. We were secretly married. As stolen waters are said to be sweet, so our happiness, as it was only known each to each, was all the more blissful and intense. But it was bliss too perfect and beautiful to endure, cut short ere we realized its perfection or that it had begun, for this father is naught but a world of sorrows perfidy and afflictions, the cup of which is oftentimes too bitter to taste, their weight too heavy to be

endured. Father, in the balances of affliction have I been weighed.

"But O father, spare me, spare me I beseech you the recital of my griefs, the ruthless Jesuitical priestcraft by which my life was desolated, turned from a garden as into some arid waste."

"And was there any issue of your marriage?" Father St. Vincent asked.

"Yes my son, one child."

"And does he still live?"

"He does and is now being educated at a Roman Catholic College in this country, in one of the New England States."

But we have said enough, we have shown the reader enough of this not the least sad episode of our tale, the root of all the wild erratic excesses of Bertram Gonault's life.

Years ago, in that bright summer time, secretly undertaken, scarcely had the intense blissfulness of Marjorie Gillingham's and Bertram Gonault's wedded happiness begun, ere a ruthless wile

decoyed the young wife from the lover husband's side. But to open up all its intricacies would be to add another volume to this book.

Probably ere now the penetration of the reader has recognised what was once Marjorie Gillingham or Marjorie Gonault beneath the saddened embittered coifed and veiled figure of the St. Xavier's nun.

A feeling of intense sadness came over Father St. Vincent de St. Croix.

He rose to his feet. Stern hard man that he was, the story of Sister Agatha of St. Xavier's, or as we will now call her in our own language Marjorie Gonault, seemed to have pierced his heart.

But again must the veil fall.

CHAPTER X.

A MOTHER'S TEARS.—AT LAST THERE IS REST.

WITHIN a very few days of the interview in the Italian garden of the Convent with the nun Sister Agatha related in the last chapter, Father St. Vincent de St. Croix, or as we will otherwise now disclose him to be, no other than Colonel Keinrich Vander Meulen in priestly habiliments and guise, turning his back upon St. Xavier's, the profuse hospitality of which for the past fourteen days he had enjoyed, and bidding adieu to his late travelling companion the young guileless and unsuspecting priest Father Lyola, the Reverend Mother Celeste, and the very few others whose acquaintances he had made, not forgetting Sister Agatha the

sad-faced nun, (for Father de St. Croix in his sojourn had discreetly kept himself much aloof from those around him, shrewdly arguing to himself that the tacit exclusiveness of his demeanour would be construed into the superior sanctity and wisdom of the holy Father, and the constancy of his seclusion within the walls of his cell would be attributed to his devotion, superior sanctity, and the fervour and reality of his spiritual life.)

So quitting the Convent alone, Father de St. Croix under the pretence that he was due at another Convent in the vicinity of Jersey City and New York City, wended his way back down the dusty path between the groves of chestnut trees, and again caught the white painted steamboat *Princess* on one of her southward trips to New York from Albany and Troy.

Perhaps rather fortunately the obscurity of the night, or rather perhaps the obscurity of the

small and very early hours of the morning, when the *Princess* reached her berth at the West Street Pier, favoured the unobserved arrival of the traveller as he stepped ashore in the garb which he had assumed. And then, with the confident unhesitating step of a man who knows every inch of his way, he threaded street after street in the cold chill wretchedness of the unpleasantly early morning air, to those uptown quarters into which the reader has never been introduced, where were Colonel Vander Meulen's *frau* and *bairns*, and some time rather late in the following afternoon, for the first time for many weeks he put in an appearance, once more in every-day attire at his little high up den near Battery Park where, for the first time, this prince of man-hunters was introduced to the reader in the opening chapters of our tale; and perhaps in the pages which we have written the reader has been told and seen enough of Colonel Vander Meulen to understand the attribute of his

character which had lifted him, in his particular calling, on to such a pinnacle of fame.

Following up the information imparted to him, under the conventual name of Sister Agatha, by the widow and mother, Colonel Vander Meulen undertook still another journey. But this time to a city which we need not name to the north east of New York and here, in a New England College as he had been truly informed, he found in training the young boy Bertram Gonault.

But this would open a new page of this history which we shall not pursue.

No obstacle was placed by the authorities at the College in the way of Vander Meulen interviewing the lad, and the strong family likeness which he exhibited to the late owner of Vernwood, to the late murdered Bertram, and to, of course, his uncles Lawrence and Mervyn Gonault, left in the detective's mind no reason to doubt that he was the late Bertram's son and consequently his true heir.

Colonel Vander Meulen lost no time in communicating to Mr. Lumley the result of his success in the United States, and his discovery both of Bertram Gonault's widow and his heir.

But the question arose in Mr. Lumley's mind when did the marriage of the late Bertram Gonault and Marjorie Gillingham take place. The nun Sister Agatha had told Father St. Vincent that their marriage was a civil ceremony only, and that they had been united before the Registrar in the town of F. and this statement Mr. Lumley now felt it to be incumbent on him to prove.

Search and inquiry both in London, at Somerset House, and in the town of F. was made and in due time evidence, and the registration of the marriage—a civil one only—was produced with the name of one witness attached.

It will be remembered that long long ago on the disappearance of Marjorie, then only known as Marjorie Gillingham (but in truth Marjorie

wife of Bertram Gonault,) from her Vernwood home, the bereaved and heart-rent and disconsolate husband and lover had sought alleviation of his deep sorrow or apprehension of ill in the solitude of the cloisters, and in the Cathedral aisle, under the influence of the organ's assuaging, soothing, elevating, strains, as the sunbeams came stealing so softly and silently through the tinted panes, dyeing the sacred floor and kissing and bathing in their warmth and light the altar cross. It will be remembered that two female forms in the garb of some religious sisterhood arose from their devotions near the altar, and as the husband lover sat there in deep dejection aroused his attention and interest as they quitted the sacred fane. It will be remembered that the sorrow-stricken lover followed them from the sacred building, and then they were mysteriously lost.

It was in one of these thickly veiled forms known in a semi-religious semi-charitable local

institution as Sister Judith Munro, that Bertram—though her garb concealed both face and form—believed he discovered the chief friend and *confidante* of Marjorie, and who had been the principal—indeed almost the sole—witness of their nuptials, and whom he hoped might give him some clue to his wife's secret and mysterious—if we may, let us call it—flight.

After this Bertram had again sought Sister Judith Munro, but she was said to have left the locality for some distant religious home. There seemed indeed to be a mystery about Sister Judith Munro, either about her presence or absence, which all Bertram's anxiety to penetrate could never unravel.

But now it became, in Mr. Lumley's legal eyes, a necessity to not only ascertain who and where Sister Judith Munro was, but that a specimen, for comparison with the handwriting on the register of the Marriage of Marjorie Gillingham and Bertram Gonault, of her signa-

ture, if she were living—or indeed if she had since died—should be obtained.

By means of inquiry, and a stratagem which it would take us at this late stage of our story too long to elucidate, both these ends were gained.

Sister Judith Munro was found in a religious institution in a distant and remote part of England and, unknown, even to herself, an example of her signature was surreptitiously obtained, so that when confronted with her own recent caligraphy and that on the marriage register of the Gonaults, she could not dispute,—neither did she attempt to deny—that both were her handwriting, nor attempt to dispute her presence and complicity in the secret union of Marjorie Gillingham and Bertram Gonault. Indeed why the union should have been secretly entered into, was another of the list of mysteries which will never be known, which involved Bertram Gonault's life.



But bridging over the winged flight of years, we will for the last time conduct the reader in imagination back once more to beautiful Vernwood after a lapse, following the events which we have just recited, of some nearly seven summers.

It is a bright unclouded day in June, if possible Vernwood is even still more beautiful than of yore. All that wealth and taste can accomplish has been lavished to form a superlatively beautiful home.

Moreover, during the minority of the heir, under good management, and with no spendthrift to dissipate its products in riotous living, its borders have been extended and its revenues discreetly husbanded have prodigiously accumulated and grown.

Such is Vernwood as we shall describe it under the bright June sunshine for the last time in the course of this tale.

But like as we have seen Vernwood plunged

in its utterest depths of sadness, overhung, overwhelmed as by some mysterious murderous pall, so now amid the flourish of trumpets, the flaunt of banners, and shouts of welcome, we will forget the dark chapters, the gloom, the shadow, the sorrow of the past, and look on it amid all the rejoicing which surrounds the home-coming of the heir, young Bertram Gonnault. For the joyfulness of the present seems even to outshine the gloom and sadness of the past, and from many a league have the expectant throng assembled to accord in fitting accents and with fitting honours—notwithstanding the dark clouds through which it has passed,—its welcome to the descendant of the old time-honoured race, back to the old the beautiful the time-honoured home.

The mother Marjorie too is there no longer a girl, no longer a St. Xavier's nun, but tried in the crucible of affliction, and mellowed by the influence of years, and amid all the pride of

motherhood, and as the shouts of welcome ascend, she cannot repress the floods of tears and the deep deep sorrows of those past memories which lie so indelibly imprinted on the profoundest depths of the wife's the widow's the mother's heart. Like two conflicting, intermingling torrents from mountain heights, within her breast, both joy and sorrow meet, and clash, and foam. Oh womankind, thy passions, thy love, the most perfect attributes of thy nature have brought thee many joys, but have subjected thee alas, to many many woes.

But that bright day at Vernwood like other days had passed, and the heir once more was in possession of his own.

Yes! Vernwood is bright and beautiful, but dare we darken the picture! There is one closed and ever silent chamber where the sunbeams never penetrate, in which no music of laughter ever echoes, into which no human

footfall crosses the threshold, where the dust of time has settled undisturbed.

Perhaps it were iniquitous to leave so pronounced a relic of so dark a sin.

The ignorant and superstitious say, at night when the moon shines clear and cold, they have heard uncanny echoes from within, like some murdered victim's wail.

They tell, so says the legend, that for three nights in every year the unrestful spirit of the past master of Vernwood walks the terrace outside the closed chamber at the rising of the harvest moon.

But let us close for ever this sinister episode of our tale.

The mother of the present heir, as once she renounced the world, has now for ever bid adieu to conventual life. She resides at Vernwood, but far away on the outskirts of the property, on a richly wooded hillside, a *bijou* mansion has arisen amongst the trees, and although she

seldom comes to the old mansion where too painful memories are revived, this new abode is Marjorie Gonault's home.

* * * * *

As to the future history and destiny of these characters whose actions have interwoven with the network of our story, to the reader who followed this history thus far, they may be soon and shortly told.

To take them *seriatim* as they appeared on our story's mimic stage. Horace Wyndham, as if the culture of choice roses was healthful and conducive to longevity, lived to see most of the incidents which this book relates, and amid the healthful habits and pursuits of his retirement, contrived to elude the slaying scythe of the grim old King of Terrors for considerably over five score years.

Mr. Lumley who has shuffled off what he termed his bondage and martyrdom to the law is now no longer young. By some manœuvre

he has become the possessor in fee simple of an English country seat on very reasonable terms, and having resigned the reins of the well known and lucrative practice near Lincoln's Inn Fields into Mr. Willoughby's or other able hands, he seldom shows his face in town.

Mrs. Chicketts, a lone, lorn widow, keeps a lodging house near Maida Vale, for poor Chicketts — whom she worried to death — is dead.

After a rather lengthened sojourn in England old Jeph and Martha Massey together with their son Jules returned to the United States, the two former returning to Maryland. But Jules, rather than proceed further, and having money in his pocket to spend, decided to settle down among other gentry and other gentility of his own colour in the "hub of the Universe" the city of New York, where on Sixth Avenue, almost any Sunday evening, his tall erect and rather haughty form may be met, not less

elaborately dressed and jewelled than when in the English capital; now the pride of himself and the pride of his race. By Jules' side, when on Sixth Avenue on the promenade, is usually to be seen a dark fair one whose ebon hue is lighted up by incessant smiles and the pearl-like brilliancy of faultless rows of teeth which it seems to be her constant occupation to display. This is Lizzie whom Jules has honoured by making her his bride.

There is another actor in this drama whose services in the cause of enlightenment and truth we must not forget! Neither are they forgotten! for Monk lived to an advanced and honoured age, and in a sequestered glen, near the Mausoleum at Vernwood, in a grave around which the rhododendrons bloom, and where the sombre shadows of a cedar fall, a tall and slender obelisk of faultless marble points upward to the fleeting clouds or sunlit skies, telling in graven characters what Monk had done; and there let

us only add "requiescat in pace" to the lettered honours of his tomb.

Doctor Sirius Wells is neither more nor less, neither greater nor smaller than he was, while the little ferret man Paul Neugass is a New York man-hunter on his own account, for on his shoulders has the cloke of his master, that past master in his calling Vander Meulen fallen.

The two surviving of the triplet brothers, namely, Lawrence and Mervyn Gonault, (for so we will call them—by whatever name or names they were subsequently known) so far disappeared from the great tracks of civilization that their whereabouts was never afterwards generally known, but they were believed to have retired into the great silver mining regions beyond the Mexican frontier and the Rio Grande, where perhaps at the instigation of their beautiful Spanish Mexican mother, and by the aid of the secret fraternity of the "Sons

of Cain" they plotted further crimes or rather let us hope they lived to regret their past.

Keinrich Vander Meulen for his intelligence, energy and "smartness" in his complete elucidation of all the puzzling mystery in which the Vernwood tragedy was involved, received what was a mere fraction of the Vernwood revenues, fifty thousand dollars reward. And what became of him?

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The sun was fast sinking towards the horizon when far far away towards the towering peaks of the Rocky Mountains a comfortable looking prairie homestead seemed tacitly to invite us, after a long day's weary travel to crave rest shelter, and hospitality for hungry man and jaded beast.

Both were granted.

The work and travel of the day had come to an end as we sat together under the verandah of the cosy Western home, the fumes of that

solace of the Western weary, the inevitable weed, were circling around our heads, scenting the pure fresh prairie air and enveloping our presence in a veritable haze. Away out upon the prairie and in the adjacent stock-yards our eyes roam away on to the wealth of its owner in vast herds of resting kine. Near by us some half-dozen idle cow-boys, after the labours of the day, have grown hilarious and boisterous over the chances of a game of *euchre* played with dirty greasy cards, and as Colonel Keinrich Vander Meulen who is owner of the ranche, and "bos," and is also our host, and we are his guests, as we sit by his side in the agreeable falling of the gloom, among the chances of his life he tells us what we, dear reader, have told to you, the story of the sapphire shield crossed by the sinister bar.

And that, said Colonel Vander Meulen, was how I came to be a *ranchero*.

THE END.

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